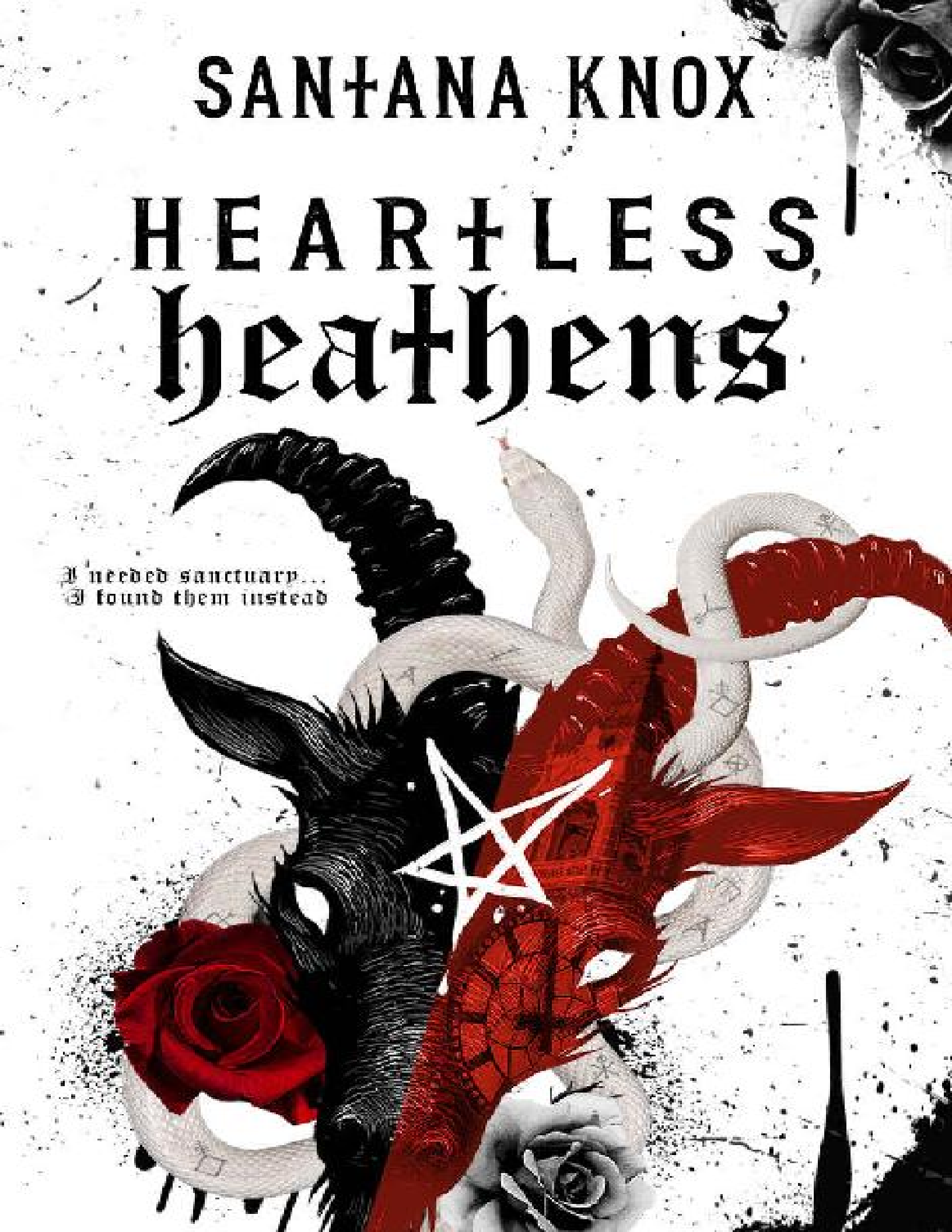
SANTANA KNOX

# HEARTLESS heathens

I needed sanctuary...
I found them instead



# HEARTLESS
# heathens

SANTANA KNOX

OceanofPDF.com

Heartless Heathens © 2022 Santana Knox

All rights reserved under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Warning: the unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a fine of $250,000.

Editor: Karen Washo, Utterly Unashamed, LLC

Cover design: Leah Marie, Designs by LM

Interior graphics: Brianna B., FlashFryed

My sanity: Amy Oliveira

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Contents

Dedication

Content Warning

Author Note

1. Romina

2. Felix

3. Sonny

4. Romina

5. Corvin

6. Felix

7. Sonny

8. Romina

9. Felix

10. Romina

11. Corvin

12. Frollo
13. Sonny
14. Romina
15. Felix
16. Corvin
17. Romina
18. Romina
19. Sonny
20. Corvin
21. Romina
22. Felix
23. Romina
24. Sonny
25. Romina
26. Felix
27. Corvin
28. Sonny
29. Romina
30. Romina
31. Felix
32. Romina
33. Sonny

34. Romina

35. Romina

36. Corvin

37. Romina

38. Sonny

39. Romina

40. Felix

41. Romina

Epilogue

Acknowledgments

Other Books By

About the Author

*OceanofPDF.com*

*For those of us who burned our way out of a church just to get on our knees for a different kind of communion.*

*OceanofPDF.com*

Heartless Heathens Playlist

available on Spotify

Devil Town - Bright eyes

Laughing with - Regina spektor

The Devil Wears a Suit and Tie - Colter wall

Jesus Christ - Brand New

Prince Charming - Metallica

I Saw Her for the First Time - Dr. Dog

Waste - Brand New

Devouring Me - Scarlett Rose

If I had A heart - Fever Ray

Choke - I Prevail

Heathens - Twenty One Pilots

BloodMoney - Poppy

Pet - A Perfect circle

Fuck Was I - Jenny Owens Youngs

In Love - Dr. Dog

The Wolf - Fever Ray

Could Never Be Heaven - Brand New

God Complex - Vita

Werewolf Heart - Dead Man's Bones

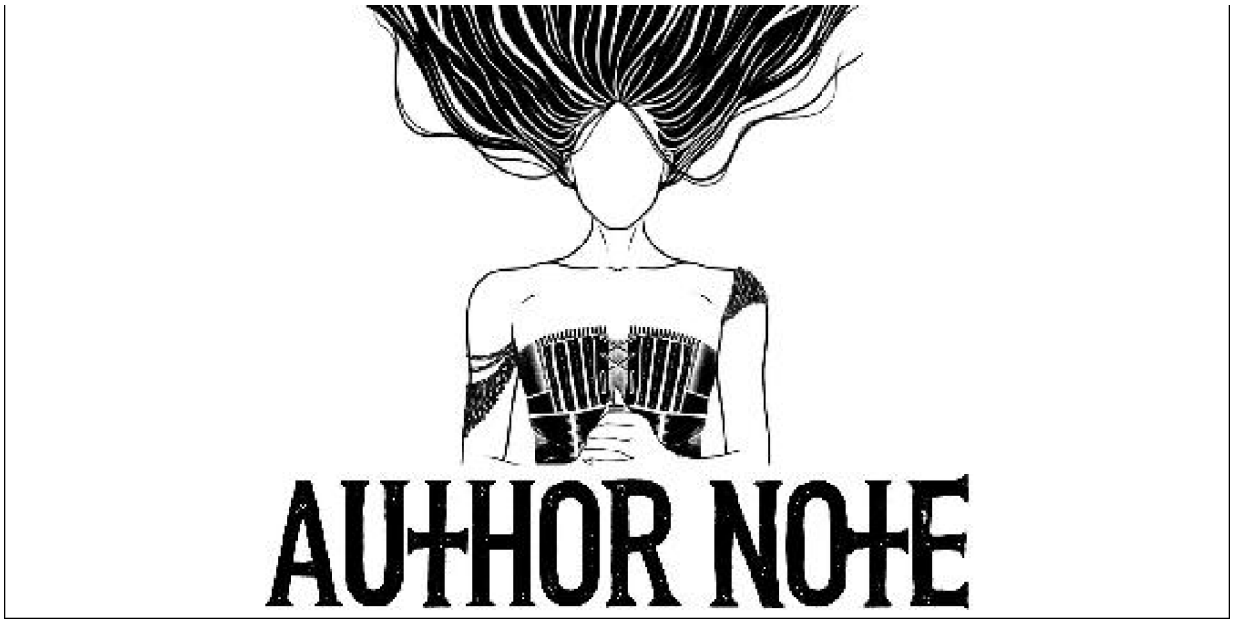
Dead And Lovely - Tom Waits

*OceanofPDF.com*

**Possible spoilers ahead:**

Explicit language, death of parents, history of trauma, murder, gruesome deaths, suicidal thoughts, traumatic adoption, disembowelment, dismembering, drowning, sexual asphyxiation, choking, dubious consent(this is a loose interpretation, some may consider it nonconsensual), physical assault (not done by the love interests), attempted sexual assault (not by the love interests), coercion, unprotected sex, light degradation, birth control, coerced attempted suicide, feelings of panic from trauma, blood play, knife play, bomb threat, bodily mutilation, explosion, child abuse, neglect, fictional Satanic worship, fictional Occultism, Christianity, nonconsensual drug use, anti-Christian rhetoric, horrific situations, incestuous situations (main character has sex with twins simultaneously.)

*OceanofPDF.com*




There are times the FMC is presented with a safe-word, this is NOT BDSM and is not a depiction or attempt to replicate BDSM. The male main characters of this book are flawed and disturbed individuals. This isn't a story about heroes, and it isn't a story of traditional love. I feel I have to clarify that this is just a story that lived in my head, it is no way intended to romanticize dangerous and violent relationships.

There were many times I wondered to myself and to others, “Should I publish this?” And while every person I asked answered me yes, maybe someone should have said no.

This story also focuses on a strong Anti-Christian rhetoric. It’s a dystopian time where Christianity is the evil in the country and has essentially eliminated any room for any other religions to exist. There are imaginary/fictional portrayals of Satanic worship, this is in no way to be associated with the Satanic Temple and its practices or the Satanic Church.

Though this book is loosely inspired by Victor Hugo’s NotreDame de Paris I would also like to state that these are just nods and tributes I pay with certain elements of the story or character names. The Romani people are not mentioned in this story, it is not for a lack of respect but out of the knowledge that It was not my story to tell.

*OceanofPDF.com*

*"You call out God's name one more time while I'm between your legs, even he won't be able to save you, little lamb," he rumbled into my ear.*

*His anger was too apparent to deny, but somehow the fear he invoked from me just forced the liquid heat to pour out freely between my thighs.*

*With a single hand, he pinned my wrists above my head while thrusting his thick length deep inside me too fast, at an almost punishing pace. His tempo was steady and my breasts jiggled with every electrifying slam of his hips. His free hand palmed them under his coarse touch, sending shivers down my spine.*

*"Oh, G—" I cried out, stopping myself in time to remember his recent threat.*

*His mouth found the other nipple, his tongue swirling wildly across the hardened beads, and an unfamiliar feeling began to build low and deep within me.*

*“Does that tight pussy hurt when my fat cock stretches it out like this?” He thrust deeper into me, forcing another scream out of my throat, and I nodded.*

*But it hurt so good, and that was even more frightening.*

*“I knew you were a little slut,” he said, moving his hand down to my center, circling his fingers around the slick bundle of nerves he was pushing against.*

*The feeling in my core intensified, heat filling me up from the inside, begging to pour out.*

*“I didn’t think they could come their first time,” he said, looking over his shoulder.*

*I gasped and panted between violent thrusts, reaching for something I couldn’t grasp on my own.*

*“Look how well you take me.” He grinned, watching the motions between us with a marveled look dancing through his eyes.*

*A dark chuckle echoed through the room, but I couldn’t discern which of them it came from. It was too foggy to make out where we were and who was there.*

*“My dirty little whore. What would your God say if he knew you were calling his name while you squirmed on my cock like this?” he purred into my ear, his words meant to insult, but somehow unleashing the very thing I was holding back.*

*It exploded in a shockwave, like a dam bursting open. I moaned, clawing onto him, the sheets, whatever I could find as I rode on what I could only describe as a wave of pleasure that I was desperate to drown in.*

*“Filthy, filthy, whore.”*

*His voice began to morph, from the silky, deep rumble that melted me from the inside out to a sinister one. One that was filled with hate and a disapproval that doused my fire.*

*"I knew you were just like your disgusting whore of a mother." He continued, his face slowly becoming focused as his voice became slimier and more vicious with each word.*

*His hand clasped around my throat. His eyes burned with a wild hatred, and he squeezed, cutting off my breath. Finally, I could see his features shaping into that of my guardian, Claüde Frollo.*

I woke up in a frenzy, drenched in sweat, from the confusing nightmare. Reaching south to feel the aftermath of the *too* realistic fantasy. I parted my lips in shock to find how slick it was down there.

That was the third time this month I'd had that dream. It was the only one I seemed to ever have anymore. Sometimes there was more to it, sometimes I woke up and that's where it ended. It was a story I couldn't find the ending for.

The worst part about wondering whether you'd started to lose grip on reality was that no one could talk you out of it. Once you'd begun to toy with the very fabric of your own sanity, all you could do is grab a sled and slide down that steep slope like the Devil himself was on your back.

When I was younger, I used to think that everyone lived this way. That this was normal. But as the veil in front of my eyes slowly lifted, the story I clung to fell apart. I became jaded, bitter.

I looked around the room, those four walls were my entire world. I knew nothing outside of it. Except for that one week. My iPad glitched and the child locks didn't work. I browsed YouTube for hours until I could feel my brain practically melting inside of my head. Father Frollo nearly lost his

mind and tried accusing me of witchcraft. He said if I ever mentioned the accident again or any of the things I'd seen, he'd make me pay.

But the damage had been done. My mind began to collapse in on itself.

I tried to focus on something else, anything else. But his words always found me.

*Worthless*.

*Filthy.*

That's what he'd said.

When someone fills your brain with an idea every single day, you start to wonder if maybe they're onto something. What if they see you better than you see yourself? So you stay hidden, hoping that no one else will notice who you truly are.

The reality is—my story doesn't have a shocking start. No blood curdling event that would pull you in and make you think it's even worth listening to.

Or let alone me telling it to you.

A story is only worth telling if the lie is worth listening to. And that's just the thing about me. I'm not worth listening to.

*He* said so.

Headmaster Frollo, the Archbishop. That's what most people call him around here.

I call him Father, you know, in the *holy* leader sort of way.

He's not my real parent and he doesn't miss the opportunity to remind me of it. I'm just a burden he was strapped with, a dirty secret he has to keep from the world.

You see, I'm a myth around here.

An urban legend.

You grow up locked away in the belltower of a religious university and you end up as the ghost that everyone whispers about. They walk past with their necks strained, looking up in their search for me.

The headmaster's secret ward.

They're desperate to get a peak of the girl born of sin.

Father Frollo said my mother was a whore who came to him for help when the sickness hit. She was pregnant and had nowhere to turn to. She died in labor, and the pious Cläude Frollo was a man of virtue. He'd never turn away an innocent in need, no matter what others in his position would have forced him to do in the name of purity and God.

He raised me. Kept me a secret from the church he now leads and the school he rules. They would look down on him for helping someone as tainted with sin as my mother and taking in her shameful offspring.

So here I stay, locked away inside, where no one even knows I exist. To protect his virtue, and my own.

And that's how it's always been, as far back as I can remember. But I'm not a little girl anymore, and this is the year I promised myself that I would convince Father Frollo to let me join the students in class. I've excelled in all of my homeschooling, and I'm more than ready to be out there with them.

I'm desperate to know what people are really like. All I know is how they appear from a distance. The far off sound of their laughs and conversations entwined with the music of the wind brushing through the thick cover of trees that surround the campus.

Until the leaves start falling.

Summer is wrapping up, and soon everyone will return to campus for the year, new and old students. I don't bother to get to know them by their

faces. They'll be gone in time, and I'll still be here, just like Laverne. Weathering away like the clock on the bell tower of this very chapel.

Two decades ago, an illness spread. More than two-thirds of the world's population ended up dying in the first five years from it before they could produce a vaccine. Some thought this was the world's way of ridding itself of the very generations that were killing the planet. But, the devout—those like Father Frollo—were certain this was God's will.

A test of faith.

The gauntlet to Heaven.

My mother died of it while giving birth to me, so by his reasoning, I should have died too. Just by existing, I had failed his Holy test. It was nearly impossible to feel the urge to redeem my eternal soul, as Father Frollo called it. Sighing, I tuned in to *Mr. Rogers* for the fifth time today on the only TV channel I got. In a couple hours, my tablet's screen time restriction would be up, and I'd be able to play some games to dull the ache of boredom. Nothing else but the games worked on it, anyway.

Everything I learn goes through him first, and that's for a reason. I just haven't figured out why yet.

"Do you wanna hear my speech?" I asked Laverne, pulling the crumpled-up piece of paper out of my pocket. "He won't be able to say no once he's heard my speech. Actually, it's more of a bullet point list, but I hear those are popular too." I shrugged.

Laverne gave me that stoic look that said I was stupid to hope Father Frollo would ever let me take classes with the other students.

“Well, maybe if you weren’t so negative, things might actually go my way. I think you’re conspiring against me.” I frowned, leaning on her with a little too much of my weight.

She didn’t respond. Typical.

“Watch it, Laverne.” I patted my best friend’s cold stoney head before turning back inside the bell tower. “I’m always only a kick away from sending you tumbling down to the depths.” I reminded her with a sinister chuckle.

I’m pretty sure she let out a sarcastic “HA” at me, but it could have been the crow that landed on her head. How do you survive eighteen years of your life in solitude, with no one but an adoptive father who resents and despises your very existence, without going completely bonkers?

You don’t.

The alarm on my tablet sounded out, and I took off sprinting towards the rope. The bell tower lived inside the old chapel. Before NotreDame Parochial College received their mass funding after the pandemic, this was where students came for lectures. Three times a day they congregated for prayer led by the one and only Father Frollo. The school quadrupled in size with funding after the sickness hit, and a grand cathedral was erected in the center of the campus, far away from the old chapel.

Father Frollo was promoted to Archbishop of the entire Church, and his responsibilities and time at NPC became fewer while he worked to spread the message of God to a bigger audience. Aside from the one class he taught a week that brought him here to resupply my needs, I was mostly alone, stuck in the attic of this abandoned chapel.

The main floor was mostly empty now, aside from a few broken pews that faced the elevated altar. Stained glass windows shone brightly across the room when dawn and dusk broke through the horizon, creating the perfect cascade of rainbow colors. The beams and arches were old rotting wood now, but they still held up soundly even in the worst of storms.

Behind the altar was a hallway and a few backrooms, bedrooms, bathrooms and a kitchen for the teaching nuns who once lived here before relocating to the new building. In that hallway, right past the bedrooms, there were stairs that lead to an iron door. Behind the iron door was… me.

The bell tower of the chapel is my home. There's my bed and my essentials like my tiny refrigerator, TV, a bookshelf. A small trunk of clothing, though I don't fit in much of it anymore, and, and, and… that's it. I mean, what more do you need? Yeah, a toilet would be nice, but I can usually climb down a vine and use the broken one hidden in the back downstairs. Though, sometimes Father Frollo gets suspicious if the bucket is too clean.

*I don't want to talk about the bucket.*

I have fresh air, as long as he isn't around, that is. All I have to do is hop up to the bell tower and greet Laverne on the ledge she perches from.

She keeps watch over the campus, I like to think she's looking out for me. Keeping me from making bad decisions. The older I get, the less I'm bothered to stay his secret. But then Father Frollo strolls into the attic with groceries and a harsh reminder that I could never make it on my own out there.

He's guaranteed it.

He reminds me I'm not even enough to be considered a person. *Undocumented.*

But when the alarm goes off, I get to ring the bells and all those thoughts turn into dust and fly away.

I climb the metal spiral staircase in the middle of the attic. It leads up to the small tower where the bell hangs. There are some platforms on either side, but in the middle, there is nothing. Just a free fall back down. Leaping from the ledge, I grab the rope and use my weight to swing the bell back and forth, loving the way each hit vibrates through my entire body like it's waking my soul up from a deep sleep.

It's the closest thing to freedom that I've ever known.

Each clang unleashes a new part of me I didn't know existed. Even if it's just for a moment, I'm someone else, somewhere else.

I know joy.

"That'll have to stop now," Father Frollo says with a scowl, arms crossed, as he waits for me to descend. Bags of groceries sit on either side of him while he patiently waits for me to organize them.

"What do you mean?" I rush to the bags, putting away each item one by one, examining this week's haul. "I thought you said the bells were an important part of the school's culture and history?"

"We may have some extra attention on us this year." He cut a glaring look my way before continuing. "Some rather unsavory types will be attending this term. Their guardian had too much financial sway and promised essential funding that could not be overlooked by the board of education or the church." He cleared his throat uncomfortably, as if this decision had been out of his control.

He had fought against it. That much was clear.

I couldn't imagine that there was someone who told Father Frollo what to do. Someone who had more power.

“You would do well to keep yourself unseen now more than ever. Do you understand, stupid girl?” he said with eyes hardened and a sneer across his face.

“N-no. I don’t.” I confessed.

“I would hate to think what they would do if they found you, Romina dear.” His voice turned threateningly low. “A heathen does not care for the judgment of God. They have no rules, no moral compass. If it is not the fear of God that drives them to their actions, then their actions must be damned,” he spat, his anger increasing with each word.

“I will not save you if they find you. I’ve carried you as a burden long enough.” He looked down at me with some semblance of disgust on his face.

“Is there somewhere I can go?” I asked and immediately the back of his hand found my face.

“You belong to me, Romina. There are monsters out there who will eat you alive. I’ll be by less often, but I’ll find a way to bring you food.”

“W-what if I were to become a student?” I asked, hoping my solution could fix the problem.

“Ungrateful little slut,” he screamed down at me, raising his hand to strike again and I flinched back towards the mini cooler. “I am trying to protect you from these damned heathens and here you are trying to whore yourself out and mingle with them?”

“No! I am just trying—” The burning sting of his palm against my cheek came again, this time sending me to the ground from the impact.

“Romina, I do not take pleasure in scolding you, my child.” His long, sinister face grew somehow more villainous as the smile spread from ear to ear.

“I-I-I just mean that—” He struck again once more, the breath leaving me as pain exploded across my face from the sharp sting of his palm.

I was long used to the taste of my own blood.

“I won’t hear of this again, Romina. Be grateful I don’t throw you to the streets to live like your whore of a mother did. You’re an adult now. I may just force you to take responsibility for yourself if you become *too much* of a burden.” He eyed me up and down viciously before turning back and walking out the iron door, turning the key from the other side on all three of the locks that kept me here.

Oh yeah, did I forget to mention that?

As brave as I’d grown, in reality, I’d never even gone outside the iron gates of this campus. Every chance I got, I used the architecture, scaling the walls of this old chapel to sneak my way to the library on my own to borrow books. There was nowhere else to go. The forest that surrounded the campus stretched out for miles. I once spent two days roaming the woods, lost and panicking that I would either starve to death or an animal would eat me before I’d miraculously navigated my way out and back into the bell tower.

After that, I decided it wasn’t worth trying to leave.

The fear of what Father Frollo would do if he caught me was almost as terrifying as the thought of someone else doing it. I was of legal age now, and it wouldn’t take much for a clueless girl with nothing but her name to get scooped up off the street and sent off to a poorhouse.

The odds were against me out there.

There was no denying it.

OceanofPDF.com

“Look old man, if I have to wait ten minutes for you every time we have to meet, I’m going to start charging you for wasting my time.” Sonny didn’t bother to look up from his phone to acknowledge him.

“My apologies gentlemen, I was under the impression you’d be coming tomorrow. Sister Agnes had planned to be your guide.” From the tone in his voice I couldn’t tell whether he was annoyed or anxious.

Definitely amusing.

“No apologies. Just do better Frodo,” Sonny mocked, his deep voice enough to intimidate the bag of skeletons in front of us, but his tattooed face sealed the kill instead.

“*Frollo*,” he corrected.

“It doesn’t matter.” I laughed, raking my fingers through my wavy brown hair.

“Escura.” Frollo’s eyes went wide with recognition at my face once I finally looked up. “When Arlan Black said he was sponsoring students, he

did not mention it would be… *you*.” Claüde Frollo’s hands were fidgeting nervously while he attempted to rein in his composure with the fake smile he plastered to his face.

We weren’t strangers, though we’d never been acquainted.

Claüde Frollo was the reason my mother was dead.

There were no fluffier words to try to paint the story any prettier.

But while he stood there looking up at me, I wasn’t sure that he seemed as domineering, as frightening as I had remembered as a child. Was he scared of us now? I hoped he was. He’d pushed us into a corner, and now here we were, teeth barred at his door.

We were playing his game but we were changing the rules for ourselves.

He thought we were here for the same reasons every other poor fucker on campus was. To jump through the hoops he’d created that kept all those other sorry assholes in line, kept them from being able to live well. Keep the cycle going. We were neither here to save them or know them. The reality was we were here for our own self-interests. That and to retrieve something Arlan Black lost.

Or rather, Frollo stole from him.

After the sickness hit and the U.S government collapsed, the Church spared no time, effort, or energy in forcing their way to becoming the governing sanctity of the country.

If you weren’t filthy fucking rich, you’d better have gotten on your knees for God and prayed for the church to bless you with better opportunities. Those who pleased Christ’s cocksuckers got a seal of approval from the Archbishop Claüde Frollo himself to attend a professional school after graduating from these parochial crapholes.

It was the only way to become a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, or any other white coat profession that remained important in this asscrack of a crumbling society we had left. Which meant it was the only way to guarantee you could make money, support your life, maybe have a family without ending up in the poorhouses.

And as of right now, it was the only way for us to receive our inheritance.

Arlan Black was desperate for something Frollo took from him years ago and he demanded we sniffed around here to find it. He gave us four years to do it, but promised we'd be done the minute we found his things. As our guardian, the asshole had drawn up every legal agreement to ensure that if we didn't fulfill the end of our bargain before he died, we'd end up penniless.

If we came to the school, we could at least access *some* of our money. And that was better than nothing. How long would it take to find some old box of documents? The school was big, but not that big.

"Who the fuck said you could speak my family's name out loud? Don't you think you've spoken it enough?" My twin whispered from behind the old man, holding a sheathed knife to his throat.

"Are you threatening me boy?" He trembled, arms pinned to his side, frozen from fear even though his voice rang out loudly.

"The Escuras don't do anything without each other. You should have known they would both be here. It's me who's the surprise, and trust me when I say I don't want to be here just as much as I'm certain you've been praying every night for me not to come," Sonny said, nodding his head to Corvin who then pushed Frollo, dead center, between his shoulders.

He stumbled forward into our circle, nearly falling if it hadn't been for me catching him by the back of his priestly robes.

“When I threaten you, it won’t be with a sheathed knife. *Father*.” Corvin proceeded to play with the tip of the sheathe, not hiding his contempt for the headmaster.

“You must be Santorini.” Frollo cleared his throat and smoothed out his clothes, finally acknowledging Sonny and sizing up the six foot four tattooed, blue-eyed, scary-looking mother fucker and trying to hide his very obvious nerves. “Arlan Black’s adopted bastard came to find God then?” he sneered. “I relish the sight.”

Sonny scoffed.

“I think you’ve got it backwards. It’s your God who’s looking for *me*.” He crossed his arms over his chest, wisps of his inky black hair draping over his eyes.

There weren’t many people alive who *didn’t* know, or at least know of, Arlan Black. The guy had been living in infamy as one of the world’s richest multi-billionaires. What *most* of them didn’t know was that he was the leader of a Satanic cult thousands of years old. With his bloodline dead, he’d spent Sonny’s entire life grooming him to take his place as leader.

“I’ll show you to the dormitories, then you can see yourselves out until the start of term,” Frollo said, turning forward to try to pretend like he hadn’t just been humiliated by three guys twice his size and a third of his age.

It was impossible not to feel that way around my brothers. Corvin was my blood, my older twin, even if only by just a few minutes.

Sonny Santorini grew up with us, side by side. Our friendship was orchestrated by our families, you know how rich people like to stick together. Arlan Black was the ringleader, but he wasn’t the only one. We came from money, very *old* money. Money that’d been around since before

this country was founded, and money that would be here to help us see to its end.

Our father married into this tepid cesspool, which meant our mother had a very strict prenuptial agreement to protect her and her children's finances. The minute she died every penny she ever had was frozen and put into an account for Corvin and I, our father disappeared, and my mother's arrangements listed Arlan Black as our legal guardian.

After all, he'd been the one who'd drawn up Lolita Escura's legal documents to begin with. He'd also already been raising Sonny Santorini, and when you've got one orphaned rich heir to look after, what's two more for your servants to raise?

He wasn't a decent old man. He lived far too disconnected from the reality we were living in. He favored money, power then Satan over his followers. If there was anything left in his cold shriveled heart after all that, he left it for us.

Spoiler alert—there wasn't.

It wasn't all his fault, it's not like there was someone to shove the truth in his face like the old days. Even the internet was censored, unless you were able to find a hacker willing to take American blocks off your phone. Then you could see what the rest of the world had to say about us.

And they didn't give a shit either.

There was no American media anymore, no one who would speak out and attempt to get people to wake up to the reality of what was happening behind the picture the church had painted for their "New Holy Future." Homeless people were cleared from the streets and prisons began to convert into labor warehouses to support major corporations.

They called them poorhouses as an attempt to shine the light on history repeating itself, but the irony was missed, and the nickname stuck.

Capitalism was the real disease, and the church knew just how to use people's greed and desires to fuel their needs. It was the poor who were at fault here, not creating enough children to work in the restaurants, and retail stores they shopped in. It was the sick and disabled's fault for not putting in enough hours to get every box shipped quicker than humanly possible.

And people didn't just buy that shit. They ate it up for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Who didn't love a good fall-guy?

I remember learning about the branches of government as if they were Greek mythology when I was a kid, none of that shit existed anymore. The supreme court was the only remnant of the old United States, and all it was now was a megaphone to enforce the church's ridiculous laws.

The country was a shithole, and we were headed deeper into the pit of it if we couldn't remove the church's hold from the nation. The elite, the very wealthy, lived differently. But everyone else…they weren't so lucky. Cogs crushed under the wheel as it drained their blood and turned it into fuel for the capitalists to thrive off of, like a fountain of youth elixir.

Metaphorically speaking of course.

As for the majority of non-Christians, if they had the means they fled at the first hint of separation of church and state collapsing. Roe v. Wade being overturned was the first sign. Too used to the predictable outcome, they knew better than to stick around to watch it fester and to lose everything they and their ancestors had spent so long fighting for.

Sonny was none too happy to be here. I couldn't blame him. We were supposed to be starting Oxford in the fall, instead we were here catering to

Arlan’s antics.

Arlan Black was King Shit. Our families had been connected for generations, and his daughter had been raised with our mothers. Just the same as we’d been raised with each other. Except now he was the only still living member of his two thousand year old line, and by the looks of it, he was likely too old for any chance of a new offspring happening.

He was grasping at straws with each day the grim reaper creeped closer and now it seemed he was desperate. I guess it didn’t matter how old your money was if you had no one to give it to. If your legacy ended with you and there was no one willing to drive it forward. He may have raised us, but at the end of the day, I wasn’t a Black. I was an Escura, and Sonny was a Santorini.

Everything Arlan stood for would die with him.

“I’m not sleeping in shared quarters.” I laughed at the old man before he wasted his time walking us halfway across campus.

“I’m sorry, would you prefer *my* room in the cathedral?” he asked in a sarcastic tone, but I was tempted to tell him yes to see who'd break first.

I could already tell we were in for a hell of a year, destined to butt heads with Frollo at every turn. This was his domain, but our money was still louder.

“It’s not a bad idea, maybe you could clear out some of those private quarters for us. I’m sure our benefactor would be pleased to hear how well you’re accommodating us with all the funds he’s provided you,” Corvin said shamelessly and I choked out a laugh.

“You cannot be serious, I will not relocate teachers—” he began furiously, but Sonny cut him off.

“Nuns,” Sonny corrected, “Teachers go to school to teach. Nuns are just married to your God right? Except you’ve given them a curriculum.” Frollo’s upper lip twitched in a sneer and he angrily fisted the fabric of his robe in his hands.

“You cannot expect me to relocate my staff.” He huffed again, trying to grow taller but Sonny’s height was too significant for him to assert any authority over him.

“Settle down,” I waved him off, “No one’s going to make you move.” I assured him, and he let out an anxious exhale. “There’s gotta be an empty building on this campus though.” I raised an eyebrow at him, and his eyes quickly darted to the chapel in the distance.

“Unfortunately there is not.” He fumbled with his hands again, an easy tell for his lies.

“We’ll take the chapel.” Sonny grinned at him like he’d caught it too and I watched the color drain out of Frollo’s face.

“Absolutely not, the chapel is condemned. It is not habitable.” He stood up straight, once again doing his best to regain some sort of control over us.

“That’s not a problem, we can fix that.” Sonny chuckled and the archbishop began to quickly ramble, his mouth moving a million miles a second while he came up with a thousand reasons why we couldn’t live in the old chapel.

Sonny tapped a few buttons on his phone before flipping the screen over to us, “There. It’s ours.” The half-smile that draped over his face was creepy as hell, and it was the reason I loved the bastard so much.

No one could put fear into your heart quite as easily as when Sonny Santorini had decided on something.

“You can move in with the start of classes on Friday,” Frollo announced, turning to walk towards the old chapel.

“I don’t think you heard him,” Corvin said, putting his hand on the old man’s chest. “That’s no longer church property, that’s ours.” Frollo’s eyes widened, and his stutter got the best of him again.

“T-t-that’s preposterous. I-I have belongings to clear out of there, you can’t expect to just b-b-barge in and—”

“That’s exactly what we’re doing Claüde, you heard my brother. The chapel is ours, and so is anything inside of it. If we find your belongings and we don’t want to keep them, we’ll set them out front with the rest of the trash.” I winked at the old man before leading the three of us into our new home.

“Oh, and If I catch you in our house, you’ll be greeted with more than just the sharp end of my knife, catch my drift?” Corvin said, lifting up his shirt to expose the gun hiding in the waistband of his pants.

“*That’s* a threat,” Sonny said with zero inflection before turning his back on the archbishop.

“At least it’s far from campus. He’ll stay out of our business, and we’ll be able to see him coming.” I told both of them once we’d finished the long walk to the old chapel.

It looked rough as hell on the outside, and I was slightly concerned that proving our point here was going to come back to bite us in the ass.

“How’d you get this place so fast?” Corvin asked Sonny.

“Arlan took care of it. I just told him there was a good chance that what he was looking for was in here and that Frollo wouldn’t let us in.” He thumbed through his phone while we walked up the chapel stairs and opened the doors.

“Oh, fuck no.” Corvin groaned and I laughed out loud when the reality of the shitty chapel came crashing down on us in a dusty cloud.

“New plan, get this place gutted, cleaned, and furnished. I’ll be back Friday for the start of term. I’m not living in these conditions,” I joked trying to fake my leave but Sonny grabbed me by the back of the collar and pulled me back in before closing the chapel doors.

“This place…it’s where we need to be,” he said with that eerie way about him, his black hair draped over his bright blue eyes. “Can’t you feel it?”

“Don’t get ominous on me dude.” I plucked him off of me. “It’s just a shitty old chapel.”

“What we need is here. Which means we’ll get out of this place soon enough.” His tattooed fingers tapped at his bottom lip while he paced around the empty space, surveying what would be our new home.

The grin Corvin gave Sonny looked borderline dangerous. They were similar in that sense, the way they could put fear into a stranger with just a glance. It helped when you had tattoos from your throat all the way to your toes. If we weren’t carbon copies of each other, I would have pegged the two of them for brothers instead.

The way both of them had hair as black as the night, though Sonny kept his shorter and draped over his eyes and Corvin kept a neat fade with a long pompador, slicked back but somehow always fucked up from his motorcycle helmet.

“You act like creepy isn’t right up his alley,” Corvin laughed out, slapping Sonny on the back and earning a scowl from him that only made him laugh harder.

“He’s got something that matters to him here. We’re gonna find out what it is,” Sonny said, continuing his inspection. “You didn’t see his face when Felix mentioned this chapel.”

It only took a few steps into the hallway for our suspicions to be confirmed when the bolted steel door came into our sight.

I’d never seen a construction project completed in such a short time, but then again when you had the money to hire the best and the biggest crew, there was a lot that could be done in just four short days. New floors were installed, the broken windows were fixed, and after a coat of paint, the smell of the body of Christ was finally gone from this place.

The smell was probably all the dead rats, but nonetheless, it was definitely rancid and there weren’t enough scented candles to take it away. There were six or seven tiny bedrooms originally and we ended up tearing them down to build three larger ones in their place. The old altar area had become an eat-in kitchen that opened out into the rest of the little chapel. There a TV hung on the wall and soon furniture would arrive to fill in the rest of the space.

Sonny spent the majority of the week sitting on a broken pew, watching everything happen through narrowed eyes, like nothing could have pleased

him. It was expensive work between a Monday and a Thursday to micromanage something you had no control over.

It wasn't the epitome of luxury, but it would help get us through this year. Black marble flooring with silver veins ran along the entire chapel where the rotting oak floors had been removed. Every wall was painted black now, covering the painted imagery of Christ on the way to his crucifixion.

The amount of energy that lingered in a room without dark walls was too much to bear. We picked one shade of black and the contractors seemed relieved about it. Sonny had brought in some oversized canvases depicting different scenes from Dante's Inferno and they hung high on the walls above the stained glass windows. The paintings had likely been sitting in one of Arlan's many storage units, waiting for museums to reopen so he could sell them back.

Frollo kept his distance, surely in an attempt to preserve his dignity. Instead, Sister Agnes dropped off our schedules for the fall semester. If Latin at six in the morning wasn't going to kill me, then the 4 p.m. religious history lecture might. But, if Frollo thought he was getting one over on me by loading my schedule, then he was in for it. I thrived in that sweet spot between busy and overwhelmed.

I preferred it to the quiet screaming that happened in my mind when I was left alone to myself. I'd never been good company. There was nothing worse than sitting with my own thoughts.

No one could hate myself quite like I did.

So I just made sure I was never alone with the bastard. If I laughed loud enough, I wouldn't be able to hear him tearing me down.

Sonny however, was starting to lose his shit over the iron door. He'd asked Frollo for the key several times throughout the week, but to no avail.

Frollo refused to part ways with it, telling us that if we wanted access to the chapel's storage in the attic, we needed to grant him the time to clear it out.

That wasn't going to happen.

Sonny had spent the entire week using his shoulder as a battering ram against the steel barricade with no impact on the door itself. Frollo had triggered the security system we'd put into place a few times trying to sneak in, but the construction crew had been hired to work through the night.

Paying them extra to keep Frollo away had been a nonissue.

Still, the contractors couldn't open the door with the tools they'd brought and said a special tool would be needed to get the door open without damage. So here we were, still waiting for them to come back to deal with it.

"What if we blow it?" I heard Corvin ask.

"Can you get me the sticks?" Sonny asked him.

"Whoa, whoa, you are not gonna blow it. You put dynamite up against that wall you'll probably send that bell tower crashing down on all our heads." I rushed into the hall to stop whatever crazy idea they were starting to brew together.

"And?" Sonny asked and I rolled my eyes at him.

"I get that you don't wanna be here man, but that doesn't mean you take us out along with the architecture. The term hasn't even started. We'll get whatever's up there soon enough," I said, clapping my hand over his shoulder before he turned back towards the living room to unpack our new furniture.

"Since when do you give a fuck about architecture?" he asked me with a curious look on his face and I gave him half a smile.

“Someone’s got to, you know books killed buildings, right?” I misquoted some outdated classic and he twisted his face at me like he didn’t know what the fuck I was talking about.

Which meant I was probably far off because Sonny had read just about everything.

“Did you get your schedule? Frollo has me taking a five thirty calculus.” Corvin changed the subject.

“Shouldn’t have threatened the man.” Sonny reminded him what got him his class times to begin with, but my twin just shrugged.

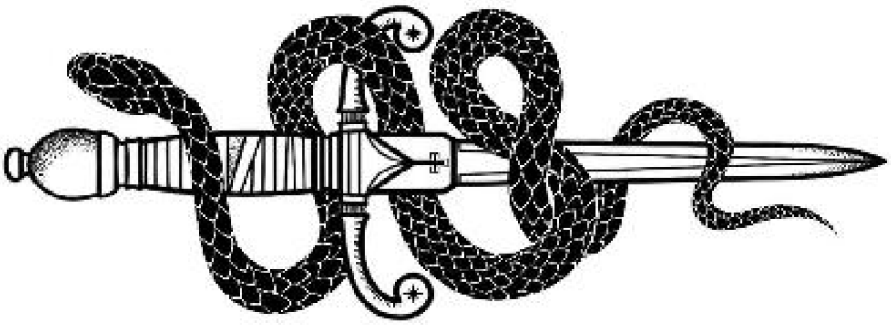
“Whatever documents he’s got up there, you think they’re gonna be worth it?” I asked Sonny.

“I think Arlan is going to make us sort through and read every little piece of shit we uncover up there before he lets us come home. You assholes fucked me good here.” He tossed the box cutter at me as he began to pull the contents out of the box, unveiling the pieces of the new couch that would soon fill up the giant empty space we stood in.

“At least we’re all fucked together,” Corvin mused from behind.

“Fucked together,” Sonny mumbled.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

“What are you doing?” I asked Corvin, who was practically power walking back to the chapel.

“Heading back to the house.” He turned quickly as if to cut the conversation short.

“Yeah he’s going home to shower after gym now.” Felix laughed, poking fun at his twin’s weird antics.

“Wait, is it getting bad? You told me you’d tell me if it did.” I stepped up to him, trying to show more concern than assertiveness in my tone but probably failing. “Is it happening again?” I put my hand to his chest to stop him from walking off.

“No, I just don’t like to be caught in places where I’d be vulnerable if it did.” He gritted out through his teeth pushing me off.

I didn’t fight it, understanding that he didn’t like feeling out of control. We were alike in that, but the difference between the two of us was that I

demanded control. Corvin became a prisoner to it. Out here we had none. We were all at the mercy of other men.

Arlan.

Frollo.

“Well, regardless, that’s not sustainable. You can’t be walking a mile from campus everytime you feel funny.” Felix chimed in behind his brother.

“We won’t be here that long.” I corrected him.

“You’re so sure we’re going to find what he’s looking for here?” Corvin crossed his arms over his chest, while I opened the door to the chapel.

“Claüde Frollo is a bad liar. He’s hiding something, most likely up in that bell tower.” I told him what had been running through my mind the last couple of days.

“You think there’s really something up there we can use?” He tilted his chin towards the ceiling, “How do we get up there?”

“I haven’t figured that out yet. You didn’t see his face when we told him he couldn’t clear the place out first. I doubt he was so worried about salvaging old pews and beds. Whatever Arlan is searching for, I think we start by looking there,” I told both of them.

“If that’s the case, I’ll climb up that wall tomorrow.” Corvin volunteered.

It was the second day of the term and I’d spent most of yesterday in disbelief of what they considered educational material.

“Where are you going?” I asked Felix, who was already changed into green gym shorts, knee-high socks, and was slipping on a jersey.

“Soccer tryouts,” he said without giving it much energy.

“What the fuck? What part of, we won’t be here long, are you not getting?” I fisted his jersey in my hands, bringing him closer to me, but he just pushed me away like he wasn’t scared of me.

He wasn’t, and he was one of three people alive who could say that. When you grew up with someone you learned all their flaws and their fears. You knew exactly what their weaknesses were, and you knew how to bring them down. That’s why we were raised together.

Arlan manipulated our friendship from the very start. Our bond. He brought us together because he knew our undying loyalty towards each other would either make us a powerful force or it would be our undoing. He wanted us to be a weapon against the church, to tear down the control they had over how people lived.

Something he’d been unable to do in his own lifetime.

His pockets were so deep that the church couldn’t avoid his influence. But he thought his money’s growth correlated directly to the public's ignorance of his beliefs. Because of that, he was too afraid of his connection to the Satanic Shrine being revealed to the public. He feared how that would impact his shareholders and his finances with the current state of politics.

An amusing concept because there was no politics, there was just the church now.

But Arlan wasn’t just connected to the Satanic Shrine, he *was* the Satanic Shrine. What he said was law and what was left of its following bowed their

heads and said ‘thank you sir.’ And for some reason they’d do the same for me once he died.

He however, *was* desperate to put me through the gauntlet in order to give me what was already mine. I didn’t give a fuck about what was his, I wasn’t his flesh and blood. Besides, my mother had left me plenty. He just refused to let me have it. Like a goddamn child throwing a tantrum, he couldn’t come to terms with his own mortality. Dangling what was promised to us like a carrot, manipulating us for his needs. He would force us all to bend to his whims to make sure he could orchestrate as much as possible until he took his very last breath.

Maybe my control issues weren’t so much hereditary as they were ingrained into me by the man who raised me.

Either way, we’d get nothing until we fulfilled his little errand.

More than anything, he feared what kind of damage we could do with access to that much money. As for his share, I sometimes wondered if he’d see it buried with him before he’d let us disturb the balance and distribute it into the world. Money was for power, for control. If everyone had it, then nobody held the power.

I didn’t disagree with the sentiment, but he didn’t understand that control had already been lost. All of the richest families pledged their money to the church, and once the Pope died, Frollo was elected archbishop. A new Pope was never chosen. Frollo promised the fat cats their cushy lives would stay cushy and that was all that was needed.

The cycle of poverty that crushed the majority of the public spun endlessly. An infallible system that couldn’t be broken.

“This shit’s dull as hell, let me have fun Sonny. You won’t like it if I get bored.” He curled half his lip in a smirk like a warning before flipping me

off and jogging towards the kitchen. Felix Escura was the kind of person who would go mad if he didn't have something to obsess over. Something to focus all of his energy into.

Too bad he didn't decide to take an interest in getting the rest of this damned chapel set up to our comfort level. The rest of the furniture had come at some point today, and Corvin had already done a majority of the set up.

The place was still trash.

But knowing how much it got under Frollo's skin, that we were here, in his sacred space, breathing the same air as his holy righteousness.

It was delicious, the flavor of his misery.

Weak men were like that, their failures became a tangible thing you could roll into the palm of your hand and mold like ammunition against them.

"Did you eat my ice cream?" The perkier of the two Escura's shouted.

"When's the last time you've seen me eat ice cream?" I asked in a flat tone.

"CORVIN!" Felix shouted, condemning his twin to suffer his wrath over the frozen treat.

"He's in class." I reminded him and he slammed the freezer shut, huffing and puffing and mumbling something about that being the second pint he didn't get to finish since we'd moved in.

A flash caught my peripheral and I looked over just in time to see someone snapping photos on their phone through one of the stained-glass windows.

*Desperate.*

They all were.

They were scared of us, because of the whole Satanic Shrine thing.

But they were enraptured by our presence.

By human nature, they desired our attention. They needed to know what it meant to be close to the Devil because they were too afraid to find out for themselves.

I stepped towards the window slowly, the shuffling of the bushes outside was barely audible but it was the mouse-like squeak of a blonde standing outside our new home that won my attention. She gasped, dropping her phone before turning back and running in the opposite direction.

I could go get her phone.

I could return it. I could throw it away. I mean, the options were endless. But the reality was, I was too apathetic about my entire situation to give enough of a shit to do anything that didn't immediately end this mission for us.

My future was waiting for me in Oxford, far from this fucking country.

Arlan Black threw a huge wrench into my plans, my entire life, all because he was decomposing before our very eyes and the very idea of a Black not orchestrating the future of the empire was blasphemy.

That's how it worked.

The Black's were in charge of every major event that went down in history for at least the last thousand years. They were the ones in charge of seating in power nearly every person at the top of the chain. Things like syndicates, government officials, celebrities. They puppeteered everything. After all, if you had enough money, you could buy *anything* you wanted. For Arlan Black to be reaching a hundred years old, and not have a single offspring to carry out his wishes exactly as he planned must have been a frightening thought.

It wasn’t his fault when the election was rigged, and the American people went crazy over that buffoon all those years ago. Some say he set off the chain reaction that led to the fall of democracy, some say he was just a reflection of the worst parts of ourselves. Either way, he wasn’t meant to come to power and after that everything went to shit.

It was before my time.

Then the virus hit, and my brothers and I were born.

Well, *they* were brothers, and they would never hear it come out of my mouth, but they were the only people on this damned Earth I loved.

So yeah, I called them my brothers too.

They were all I had.

I’d never gotten close to anyone else, and I never had the desire to. Understanding others wasn’t something I was good at, it wasn’t something I *wanted* to be good at. People weren’t for me. They were entirely too manipulable and held zero accountability.

Half the time I was just thinking about what they would look like if I took a cheese grater to their face. It soothed that kind of deep itch I just couldn’t scratch myself.

But I kept that shit to myself.

*OceanofPDF.com*

It’d been a whole week since I’d last seen Father Frollo.

I perched over the balcony in the belltower and heard the conversation with the boys who were now taking residence right below me. Without a moment’s notice they claimed my home as their own, and I knew Father Frollo would say it was imperative for me to stay hidden. It was an exhilarating, petrifying, heart quickening thought to know that there might be an adventure waiting just below me.

He hadn’t returned, but I knew he would want me to wait for him, to keep myself hidden from these men. The majority of the week was unbearably loud. I couldn’t get any reading done with all the noises, and without being able to ring the bells, my melancholy grew each day. They tore apart the chapel, completely gutting it and making it into something unrecognizable.

It was dark and gloomy, nothing like the piece of history it once was.

And I ran out of food two days ago.

I’d snuck down through the balcony both days. I’d long memorized which bricks were missing from the outside walls so that I could use them as holds to scale up and down the chapel on my own. So far, I’d only taken ice cream and the grumbling in my stomach was warning me that it was time to eat something with real sustenance.

I rolled from my back to my side, reaching out desperately for my stony friend Laverne, who mocked me from her perch before the resident crow found his way into her mouth.

“Help me,” I whispered to her, my voice hoarse and dry from not having a drink of water in nearly a day. She returned a gray look that said I shouldn’t have shoved breadcrumbs in her mouth for the birds.

She wouldn’t have helped me regardless. It wasn’t her style.

It’d been a week now since I rang my bells.

Not that there was even a soul who cared.

I doubt anybody noticed.

“Did you eat my ice cream?” I heard one of the voices I was beginning to familiarize myself with, shouting from below the floorboards of the attic.

“When’s the last time you’ve seen me eat ice cream?” The colder of the three voices answered, wrapping my chest with an icy hold.

They yelled a bit more until I felt like I was going to faint from hunger, bickering back and forth until they eventually left the chapel together. I waited my usual five or six minutes before grabbing my cloth tote bag and hanging it across my chest before scaling down the wall. The mossy ridges of each brick were smooth and familiar to me now.

I slid through the window that led inside a room with a bed, the strong scent of something woodsy but spicy invading my nostrils. I looked around,

it looked so cozy in here now, there was a lavish bed with plush pillows and the softest looking black blanket I'd ever seen in my entire life.

Much better than the rags I'd been sleeping with for the last ten or so years. I'd really only gotten it when my previous blanket had grown too small and I'd complained to Father Frollo that my feet hurt from the cold during the winter nights. He said the pain was supposed to bring me closer to God but a few years ago the heat stopped working all-together and he brought me a bigger blanket the next week. Bigger but not soft.

I dropped to the bed, nuzzling on top of the sheets and getting that warm, cozy smell all over me so I could enjoy it later when I was forced to retreat upstairs into my hiding place. It was as soft as it looked, and now I was afraid I'd never get up again. But if reading taught me anything, it was that Goldilocks always got caught, and I wasn't going to be sticking around long enough to find out just what these heathens would do to me if they caught me in their things.

I'd overheard their threats to Frollo, warning him to stay away from the chapel and that it now belonged to him along with anything in it.

Well, I was in it.

*So what did that mean for me?*

I made my way to the kitchen, opening the cabinets and grabbing whatever I could recognize as easy to eat food, shoving it into my tattered tote bag. I opened the fridge, practically tearing up at the sight of the bottles of water. I filled my bag until it was too heavy, before turning toward the sink.

*That was later water.*

I needed *now* water.

I turned the sink on, turning my head to the side before shoving my mouth under the faucet, letting the water pour directly down my throat until I was practically choking from the force of it.

I was soaked, but at least now I had plenty to drink.

Walking back through the same bedroom I came in from, I took my time observing the space now that I didn't feel like I was a stone's throw away from death's door. That's when I noticed the little bookshelf next to the bed, and the word LIES captured my eye fast enough to force my feet closer. I picked it up and tucked it under my arm before climbing out the window and making my way back to my bell tower.

I happily ate a bag of chips while looking at the campus from Laverne's ledge. Here I had a 360 view of the entire property. The lake glimmered a beautiful bronze hue while the sun set slowly over the reflected horizon, marking the end of another day. Each one felt like a countdown, but for what I didn't know.

I heard the shuffling of grass and turned my head to see a reddish-haired student standing on the ground, just outside one of the chapel's windows. He cupped his hands around his eyes while he tried to peer through the glass to take a look at what was inside. Even though I was watching him without his knowledge, there was something churning in my belly that made me uncomfortable about him watching them.

“Help me out Laverne,” I whispered over to her, and the resident crow flapped his way out of her mouth, taking a giant crow poop on his head.

“What?” he said in a confused tone, trying to remain soft and unheard but as the slow realization set in while he fingered his way through the bird poo in his hair his disgust became impossible to mask.

He dry heaved loudly enough to have one of the boys open the door and that’s when he took off running, cursing into the wind while he ran across campus with the wrath of Laverne on his head.

“Thanks, I knew you couldn’t stay mad at me.” I tapped her on the head and retreated back into the belltower. I spent most of my time up here, high above the attic, when the boys were in the chapel. Otherwise I was constantly tiptoeing and making sure I wouldn’t be noticed.

The belltower was a good two stories up from the chapel, here was the only place I felt free from the crushing panic I fell into every time I played out the scenarios in my head of them finding me.

Would they hurt me?

Would they toss me into a poorhouse to get rid of me?

Would Father Frollo fight to protect me when he’s tried to keep me from the world?

He had left me up here to starve for a week now. Would he do anything at all for me?

The heat of the summer was in full force, and I swept my silvery black hair into a bundle before tying it at the top of my head, letting the cool breeze dry the sweat beading on the back of my neck. I reached into my tote bag of treasures courtesy of the men living below me and pulled out a cold can of something.

It said hard seltzer on it, whatever that meant. What was soft seltzer? Was the can made of a different material? I drank big gulps of the fizzy fruity drink, suddenly feeling a pressure in my stomach from all of the bubbles piling up. The sound of my belch must have hit every tree in the nearby vicinity and I bent over the ledge of the stone balcony on the belltower to look below me.

Phew, that was close. My heart beat in my chest thunderously. I finished the can in three or four more swallows.

It was fantastic. I cracked another can open and chugged it down before realizing I'd soon have to climb all the way down again just to pee.

Since Father Frollo wasn't coming for me, I didn't have to pretend to use the bucket.

I burped loudly again, this time giggling at how the drink could force it out of me no matter how hard I tried to fight it. I reached into my tote and pulled out the book I'd found, still smelling the spicy, woodsy scent of that bedroom soaked into the pages. I hadn't gotten anything new to read in weeks now, the worst part about summer break was that campus buildings like the library locked up until term started again.

I would have read a service manual for a lawnmower; I was so desperate to consume some sort of new content. Running my fingers over the cover of the book, I admired the satin feel of it under my touch, before finally noticing the title.

*God of Lies.*

I read the first few pages before the words began to blur into each other. My vision wasn't the only thing that was hazy, it felt like my whole body was buzzing.

*What was in that drink?*

I stood up, my head feeling light and woozy from the sudden change. I shoved another handful of chips down my throat before I stepped and stumbled a bit. The room shifted under me and the floorboards lost their focus.

Or maybe I lost my focus? A wave of dizziness that paired itself with nausea struck me hard. The room spun and I lowered to my knees, slowly crawling my way over to Maria as if she could in any way help me.

She was just a bell.

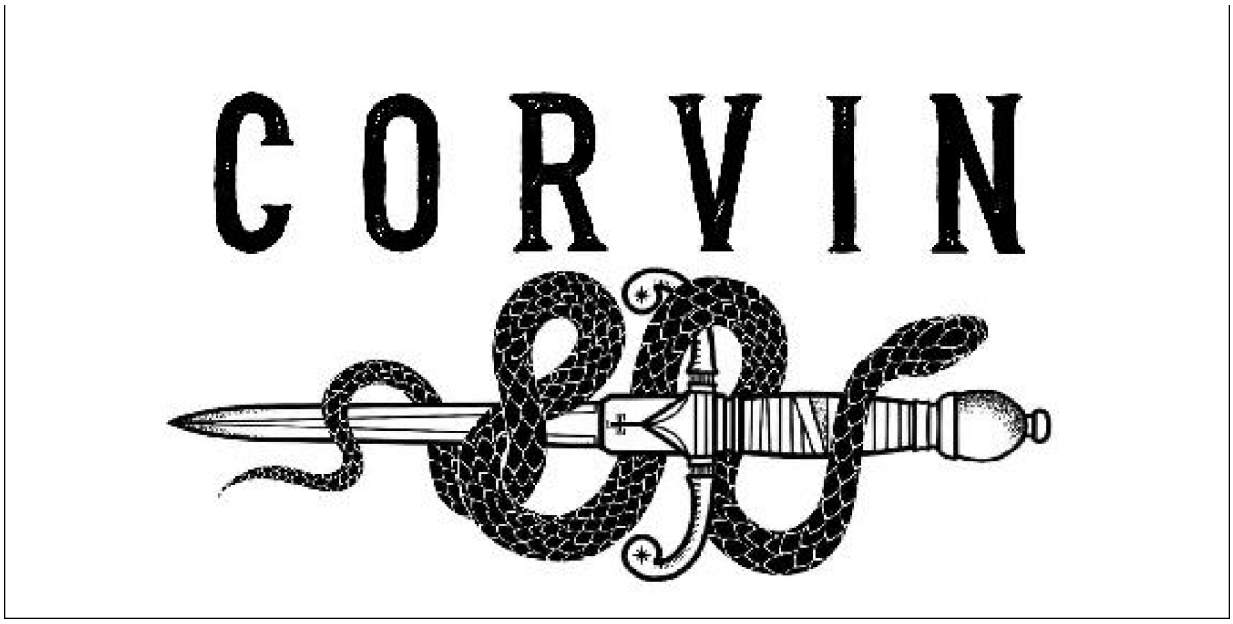
Maybe I should have stayed outside where Laverne could see me, maybe she'd carry me to my bed.

Unlikely, she'd already done me a favor today, a second would be pulling teeth at this point. I resigned to defeat and lowered my face to the ground slowly, turning my head to the side to feel the coolness of the wooden plank under my skin.

That felt nice.

"Maybe just a few minutes." I mumbled to myself before I closed my eyes and gave up fighting the swirling vortex of doom that spun around my head at warp speed.

*OceanofPDF.com*




I didn’t want to be here about as much as Sonny, but I wasn’t half as vocal as he was about the damned situation. Felix was stoked to be here, and it was rare my little brother got excited about anything since our mother was killed. He wore this mask, so that everyone still saw him the way they expected him to present to them. We both carried our pain differently.

Outside, he was the happy Escura, the positive one, the one everyone could count on to lift their sorrows and bring them a morsel of joy in this fucked up world we now lived in. But inside, he was just another sad little boy who grew up feeling the pressure to make those around him happy, thinking it would keep him from feeling so lost and alone.

It didn’t.

But we had each other, and that counted for something.

The two hour ‘Faith and Dedication’ lecture Frollo stuck me in was slowly chipping away at my soul, and it had only been two days since the

term started.

I walked through the crowd of students gathered at the door after class ended and they parted for me easily as if I was contaminated with the same virus that had killed off most of the world.

“Can’t tell if you enjoy it or if you hate it.” A blonde girl walked side by side with me and I lifted an eyebrow at her bravery. Most of these kids thought you’d go to hell just by bumping up against one of us. “Reesa,” she said, extending her hand out to introduce herself.

I raised my eyebrow higher.

“I thought this was an all-male campus?” I asked, not hiding my surprise.

“It’s not, there’s just very few of us that are stupid enough to take this risk.” She shrugged.

Well that caught my attention.

“Risk?”

“Frollo doesn’t really bother to keep his dogs on a leash,” she said, tucking her hair behind her ears.

There was a story there, I was sure of it. Though I wasn’t sure I was the person who’d care to ask about it.

“So what do you want?” I turned around once I realized she was still following me through campus.

“I’m just curious.” She practically sang it out. “About the chapel. It’s been off-limits for the last three years I attended NPC, then you guys come in and take it from Frollo.” She grinned like she had the hots for seeing the headmaster suffer just as much as we did.

“What are you curious about then?” I asked her.

“The ghost, I wanna know if she’s real,” she said and I scrunched my eyebrows in the middle, confused at what the fuck she was talking about.

“What ghost?”

“You bought the chapel but you don’t know anything about the ghost in the bell tower?” she asked like I was the stupid one here.

“I’ll let you know if I hear anything.” I gave her a deadpan stare, but she reminded me of one of those mangy little street dogs. The kind where if you accidentally dropped a french fry in a restaurant it would think it was for him, and then you were fucked with taking care of that thing until someone blessed you with running it over.

“Fuck off Reesa. We’re not friends.” I didn’t enjoy being so blunt, but it was way too fucking early in the year to have a stray stuck to me.

Actually that was wrong.

I did enjoy being blunt.

The mile walk felt like only a few blinks. It took a long time to be able to predict when an episode would hit, but as I got older, I could sense them. I got better at being able to find the warning signs so that I could find somewhere safe to get to until it was over. I took deep breaths, slowing my heart rate down as much as I could in hopes that I could push this one away.

I never could.

I rushed to my room as fast as I could possibly go, not bothering to check who was home or to alert anyone of my presence. Pushing the door open, I saw strands of silver and black hair cascading like a waterfall of liquid mercury, the head it belonged to doing its best to crawl out of my bedroom window.

I lunged forward grabbing a handful of hair. I pulled her back into my room, her yelp and cries of pain too loud to ignore but my vision was already going black and it was too late.

And there was no one to protect her from me.

In the darkness I heard muffled cries and gasps of breaths. I searched for a tether to pull me back into the present but I couldn't. It was usually one of my brother's voices but all I could hear were the sounds of her pain morphing inside my head.

Black again.

Always black.

"What is that noise?" I heard Felix far off in the darkness.

"Please!" A feminine voice scratched out but it was unfamiliar and I couldn't cling to it to bring myself out.

A flash.

The piercing blue of her eyes.

Red.

Pools of tears gathering on her lashes before each stream fell down her cheeks.

Black.

"Felix!" I yelled, but I wasn't sure if it actually made it out of my mouth.

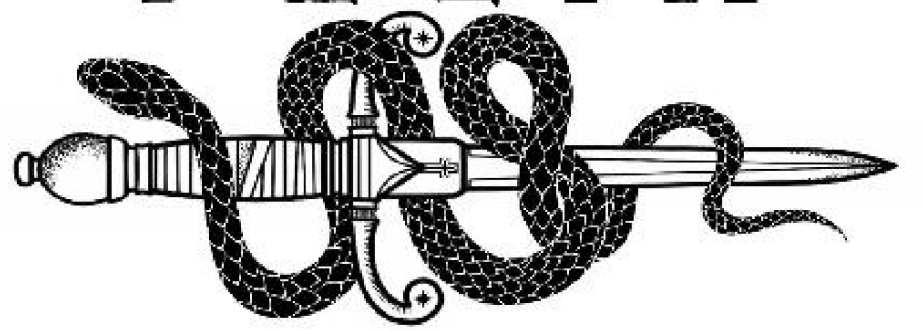
Every sound muted.

Black.

Like the swallowing chasm of the universe folding in on itself

*OceanofPDF.com*

# FELIX



“Fucking hell,” I shouted at the scene I walked into, my brother holding some girl up by the throat while her face turned a shade of purple I hadn’t seen before on someone whose heart was still beating. I tugged on his shoulder pulling him back until I could get a good look at his face. His eyes rolled all the way back and all you could see was the white.

Fuck.

He was blacked out.

Our mom was one of the last doctors in the country to provide abortions to her patients. Frollo made sure she got the electric chair for it. Corvin was there, at her last moments. I wasn’t, because I was a fucking coward. We were fifteen at the time. Ever since then, he had these blackout episodes.

He has a relatively mild form of epilepsy, and the doctors say it's related. That the trauma exacerbated it. Corvin told us it had gotten better, he spent all summer convincing us he hadn’t had a single one.

He fucking promised.

Either he was lying, or the stress of being out here was making him have an episode. I knew my brother better than I knew myself, these episodes almost always happened in situations where he felt like he was being stripped of control, of choices.

A coping mechanism.

A dangerous one.

I pulled him off the girl. The tears cascaded down her golden skin, already bruising red from the force of his hand. She sobbed an almost feral sound that came straight from the depths of her chest, reverberating through the walls of Corvin's bedroom before she collapsed into my arms in defeat.

She was fucking mesmerizing.

I'd never seen anyone like her. An array of silver hair with some onyx streaks running through it. Her eyes were a shade of blue even the clearest ocean couldn't compete against. I frowned examining her neck, the damage was already painted onto her, but Corvin wasn't to blame either. He laid on the floor, eyes rolling back, while his breathing turned short and erratic, his chest rising and falling in quick, out of sync spurts.

He would likely stay this way for a bit before he would crash for twelve or so hours. Whatever happened to his body during these episodes really took it out of him, not to mention the concussion he likely had from crashing onto the floor.

A couple years ago Arlan threw him into a psych ward for an entire month for an observed 'sleep' study. It was the longest we'd ever been apart. And all they could really tell us was that he was more violent during these episodes. There was no method to the madness inside him, and the month away from us just made him have more episodes.

So I did my best to keep him calm. Because being physically apart was painful.

But now we were just a couple days into the term, and he'd choked a girl out. And not in the sexy way either. I didn't have the bandwidth to deal with a cleanup like this. This was the kind of shit Sonny dealt with, not me.

"Hey, are you okay?" I asked, lifting the remains of the girl puddled into my arms closer to me so I could make sure he hadn't hurt her any more than what was obvious.

"What's your name? What happened?" Her eyes blew out wide and she pushed me away faster than I could react before she jumped through Corvin's open bedroom window.

I should have crawled after her, but I needed to focus on my brother. I turned back to him and rolled him to his side, to make sure he didn't bite his tongue or any shit like that.

"Hey, jackass. Come back." I called out to him, knowing my voice was typically his way out of the darkness.

It took a few more tries, which was odd, because I could almost always get him out of a black out on the first try. After a few more attempts he came back, his eyes fluttered open and his breathing stayed sharp and shallow while he swallowed bursts of air.

"Sonny," I shouted, hoping he was already home.

All our class schedules were so fucked that I wouldn't have doubted it if Frollo had purposefully orchestrated it so we wouldn't have time together. Sonny appeared at the door with little to no interest in our situation until his eyes wandered to Corvin on the floor.

"Fuck. Did he just have an episode?" He stepped into the room, quickly realizing his help was needed.

“Dude, he just attacked some chick.” I looked at him, not hiding the panic in my face.

“What? Why was there a girl in here?” he asked, arching an eyebrow and staying too calm for my taste.

“I don’t know dude, he fucked her up. She looked fucking terrified, and she jumped out the window to boot.” I told him.

We both heaved my brother into Sonny’s arms, getting him over to his bed so he could rest.

“I’m right here, you don’t have to talk about me like I’m dead,” Corvin mumbled through the fog of his fatigue.

“Well?” I asked him directly, surprised he could manage any coherency.

“I don’t know,” he breathed out heavily before continuing, “who she was.” He turned his chin to the side, looking away from both of our gazes as if he was ashamed to be admitting what happened. “She was in here and then, it was just some flashes.”

“Fuck,” Sonny shouted, kicking over Corvin’s nightstand.

“What if we find her before she gets to anyone? Maybe we can make it go away?” I asked, looking at Sonny for approval.

“Okay, let’s start there. We’re going to be royally fucked if we need to pull a favor this large from Arlan before we’re even a full week into the term.” He bit the cuticle of his nail as he thought about it. “Yeah. Go find her Felix.”

“What? Why me?” I shouted, “How the fuck am I supposed to find her?” I asked.

“Well, Corvin is out for the count, and I don’t know what she looks like, so that leaves you. Go fucking find her.” He pointed out the window, and I sighed heavily.

I fucked myself on that one, couldn’t blame anyone else really.

“And you, you fucking asshole. Have you been keeping this from us?” Sonny shouted at Corvin, uncaring that he looked like a remnant of himself.

He was gonna force him to drown in his own pathetic self-induced misery. If he hadn’t been keeping this from us there was no way in hell we would have left him alone, unsupervised, to hurt himself or someone else.

I knew he needed independence, to be self-reliant.

I wasn’t trying to take that from him.

But if he was getting worse, he needed to let someone help him through it.

“It’s been a stressful week.” Corvin refused to admit anything else and crossed his arms over his chest.

“You fuckin’ lyin’ to me?” Sonny knew but asked anyway.

Corvin sighed heavily and ran his fingers through his hair, the exhaustion from the blackout leaving a physical trace on him. He leaned his head back against the headboard.

“I don’t wanna be here just as much as you don’t. Okay? Is that what you wanna hear? That I don’t want to be Arlan’s errand boy and play fetch for him just so that we don’t end up in a poorhouse?”

“Then get your ass up in the attic so we can find out what Frollo is hiding from him.” He directed and Corvin nodded slowly, closing his eyes. “Did you bring your meds?” he asked him and I slowly backed away, knowing a fight was probably imminent.

“I’m not taking that shit, it turns me into a drooling fucking zombie and I forget everything.” His eyebrows furrowed heavily with his scowl.

“Well, you’re not going to be free to hurt anyone who inconveniences you, so unless you want a permanent babysitter, you’ll start taking them

again.” He stood over him, his presence taking up so much more space than mine ever really could.

“Sonny,” Corvin gritted out in a challenge, but even I knew it was useless.

Sonny’s word was law.

That’s just how we did things.

Maybe because Arlan Black had spent the last nineteen years drilling it into our brains that it would be this way.

“At least a half, on days when you’re feeling a lot of pressure.” I knelt by my brother, hoping to diffuse the situation and not push him into another episode.

Sometimes when things got really bad, he would get into what we called “rolling black-outs.” He’d get stuck falling back into a black-out the minute he would come out of another, and he’d have to be medically sedated in order to avoid permanent brain damage from the seizure-like effects.

“Whatever.” He consented with a mouth full of loathing that only my brother could achieve.

“Grow up.” Sonny tossed him a water bottle, but I caught it before it could hit him in the face, knowing sometimes he got pretty physically weak from these episodes.

“Quit being an ass. Take care of him or I’m not gonna go look for her.” I threatened.

“Then we’ll all be fucked.” Sonny shrugged and made his way over to the side chair on the opposite side of Corvin’s bed, putting his feet up on the mattress and leaning back with his hands behind his head.

He was a beautiful bastard, but he could be a cold, cruel asshole.

His father *and* Arlan made him that way. Though he did his best to be everything his father wasn't, some traits you just couldn't wash out, even with extensive grooming. Carmine Santorini had been a miserable piece of shit, and Arlan Black was scarier than the Devil himself. The combination wasn't a hopeful one.

I strapped on my shoes and hopped out of the same bedroom window as the girl, trying to see if she'd left me any possible clues of where she might be heading but I figured my best bet was the dormitories. There was nothing else for at least a hundred miles in any direction.

What the fuck was she doing all the way out here? The chapel was at least a mile from the dormitories. If she came from the dorms, maybe other students had seen her. I jogged across campus as fast as I could, doing my best to not look like a total maniac to everyone who I passed by. What was I even looking for? A disheveled silver haired girl? I didn't even know what the fuck she was wearing.

It was a blue dress, no it was white?

A nightgown?

Why would she have been wearing a nightgown?

I burst into the dormitory lobby, taking a second to catch my breath. I looked around, seeing a tiny blonde girl with a badge that said "RESIDENT ASSISTANT" sitting behind the desk with her feet up and her phone propped on a stand.

"You seen a girl come in here?" I asked. She pulled her earbuds off without looking up to answer.

"Why don't you try being more specific?" she asked in a sarcastic tone before her eyes found my face and she saw my lack of amusement. "Wow.

You both really look the same," she said, letting me know she'd already met Corvin.

"That's what identical means."

"Who are you looking for?" She rounded back to my question.

"She had silver hair. Might have been wearing a nightgown, maybe just a really ugly dress. She seemed upset."

"Um." She bit her lip like she was trying to hold back a smile at my expense. "Sounds like you saw the ghost, we were all taking bets on whether or not she'd curse you all."

"What the fuck are you talking about? What ghost?" I asked, crossing my arms.

"Y'all really don't know shit about this school do you? I tried telling your twin about her." She seemed like she was entertained by our ignorance.

"Apparently not, I didn't even think they let girls in here," I confessed.

"There aren't many of us. You either gotta grow teeth in your cooter or carry a knife to survive the rabid dudes on this campus." She shrugged.

"The girl…" I reminded her, feeling frustrated at how much of my time she was eating up.

"Well, if it's your ghost…she's like an urban legend around here. Supposedly some girl died in the bell tower like twenty years ago or some shit like that and now she haunts the chapel. Some people say they've seen her around the library or in the woods. Yours is the first sighting of the year." She picked up an apple and bit into it before dropping her feet from the desk.

"A ghost? That's not what I'm talking about, I'm looking for a girl that's probably really upset and scared. I need to make sure she's okay," I

clarified.

“And where did you see this sad girl?” She did this weird thing with her lips like she was just baffled by my inability to believe her ghost story.

“In the chapel,” I sighed, running my fingers through my hair, realizing how it appeared but knowing damn well what I saw with my very own eyes. “But it wasn’t a ghost.”

“If it sounds like a duck dude, I don’t know what to tell you.” She shrugged her shoulders. “Anyway,” she flipped open a laptop and started scrolling through some software system, “no one’s checked into the building for about thirty-five minutes now, and the elevator doesn’t open if you don’t check in down here. I would have noticed. I don’t think your mystery girl is in this building.”

“Thanks,” I said, turning around. “If you see a silver haired girl, come find me.” I told her and she nodded. I grabbed her arm and looked straight into her eyes so she knew I meant it, “Not Frollo. Not anyone else. You find me first. Got it?”

“I got it dude,” She shook me off with an eye roll and slammed her laptop closed. “I’m Reesa by the way. Rude.” she shouted in my direction but I didn’t bother to turn around and introduce myself.

I spent the next two hours looking like a total lunatic, stopping any student I passed by to ask if they’d seen the silver haired ghost girl, but the only thing I got was a huge waste of my time and different versions of this myth.

One student said she was Frollo’s dead daughter, haunting the school grounds after he’d killed her in sacrifice to his God. Another claimed that she was a drunk girl who was pushed from the bell tower a couple of summers ago. Some other person laughed and said it wasn’t a ghost at all, but that Claüde Frollo kept a girl hidden in the tower who he used as a sex slave.

Either way, we were apparently the only people in this school who hadn’t heard of the mystery with this bell tower.

And now we were living in it.

I gave up after sun-down but double-checked with the girl in the dormitories that she hadn’t snuck past me while I was circling this campus like a mad dog. Either I was gonna have to settle for the fact that she might *really* have been a ghost, or maybe she’d already left the grounds.

If she’d gone to Frollo we would know. The guy was begging for any chance to kick us out that he could find. He would have come flying in on the back of a crucifix with a hoard of nuns to help us pack our things if he’d already heard of what went down in Corvin’s room.

It was practically dark after the mile trek back to the chapel, my stomach was rumbling something awful and I knew there would be nothing but frozen pizza waiting for me when I got back. The cafeteria food was absolutely inedible here, and it wasn’t the fact that I grew up so rich I could snob shitty food, it was the fact that even with all the funding they received, these fuckers were dishing out expired food from the old prisons.

I pushed my way into Corvin’s room, knowing this was where they’d both still be.

“How’s he doing?” I practically whispered and Sonny looked up at me from a book.

“He’s been sleeping. Did you find her? Is it settled?”

“No,” I answered.

“Then why are you back here?” He asked in a flat tone, looking back down to his reading.

“Ass. I looked everywhere. Most of this campus laughed in my face too when I asked about her,” I told him, crossing my arms.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” He finally put his book down, like the conversation was finally going somewhere worth his attention.

“I don’t know, just some urban legend people here spread around. She didn’t make it to Frollo, and by the looks of it she didn’t make it to the dorms either.”

“Well then, she’s still out *there* somewhere, isn’t she?” He cocked an eyebrow again at me and he tilted his head towards Corvin’s window where the girl leaped out of a few hours back.

Fuck.

I knew what he was insinuating with just the three-degree tilt of his head.

“It’s too dark man, I won’t be able to see shit,” I protested.

“Your phone has a flashlight,” he deadpanned.

“Ok, how about this, I just spent the last three hours being slightly convinced that we bought a haunted chapel and Corvin *might* have assaulted a ghost. If you want me to go out there, you’re coming with me.” I raised both eyebrows and crossed my arms while I waited for his decision.

He looked over at my brother and I answered the question he hadn’t asked, “He’ll be fine. He’s probably gonna be out for the whole night after that one.”

Sonny sighed dramatically and put his book down on the chair before rolling up the sleeves of the black button up shirt he wore. He pushed his

black hair back and out of his face with his fingers before slipping one leg out of the window in a move that was far too uncivilized for him. Once we were both outside, we turned the flashlights on our phones and headed towards the dark thicket of trees that filled up this corner of the campus.

“This is stupid, why the fuck would she be in the woods? It’s been like three hours dude,” I whined out loud after slapping the fifteenth mosquito off of me.

“Why the fuck was she in Corvin’s room? Why was she all the way out here away from campus? Why is your brother not taking his meds?” He was concerned.

It somehow manifested itself as anger every time for him.

“How the fuck would I know?” I threw my hands up into the air, annoyed that Corvin’s problem was now more mine than his.

It had always been that way though.

We protected each other.

When our mother was killed, I was the last to know.

Corvin thought he was doing me a favor, preserving me from the brutality of it. But Sonny didn’t hesitate, he knew it would carve me open and change everything. He knew it needed to happen. Had he not told me there was a good chance I would have stumbled onto the video of it and fuck, that would have been a worse way to find out. He knew there was no escaping the truth.

That was Sonny’s thing.

He demanded honesty from everyone and he gave it in return.

Omission was as bad as a lie.

I appreciated that about him.

“Shh!” Sonny scolded me with a hiss, “Keep it down.”

“Dude if this chick has been out here for this long, she has turned into an actual mosquito bite, like whole body, just one giant red lump.” I scratched myself aggressively while he headed deeper into the woods.

“Did you hear that?” We both stayed quiet and lowered our flashlights. “This way,” Sonny whispered, following the barely audible cracking of some twigs not too far off.

“It’s probably just an animal,” I whispered back loudly and he mouthed a stern ‘Shut the fuck up’ at me and pointed to a tree.

“It’s clear out here,” Sonny said loudly. “Let’s go back to the chapel,” he exaggerated, laying out his plan for me to follow while he inched closer and closer to the tree.

He pointed me in one direction and he walked in the other and the minute I turned, there she was. It was dark but her silver hair was bathed in moonlight and practically glowing. Those blue orbs blinking back at me were an entire constellation of universes threatening to explode inside her very eyes. She looked rough, wild, and filthy as fuck.

Yet still fucking breathtaking.

Even in the pitchblack of the night I couldn’t deny it.

She bumped against my body with a scream and turned to run in the opposite direction, but Sonny was already standing there, blocking her with his too tall, too rigid, frame. He flashed his light again and she turned back towards me, deciding then that Sonny was not the one she wanted to do battle with.

A wise choice.

“What’s your name?” I asked her again, but she shook her head, staying silent.

“He asked you a question,” Sonny spoke loudly, the authority dripping from his tongue.

“I-I-I,” she stuttered and a hiccup sound came from her. She’d been out here for hours and by the looks of it, she’d spent every second crying.

“We need you to come with us,” I spoke softly, hoping I could convince her without Sonny resorting to some sort of threat.

“W-w-why?” she asked, shaking her head fearfully.

“My brother, he didn’t mean to hurt you,” I started but my words only made her eyes widen and she took a step back from me.

Like she recognized his face on mine.

Sonny was already there, his chest a solid wall that might have broken her just from the impact. He used one hand to keep her from falling and steadied her upright. We both closed in on her, leaving the gap between us nearly non-existent so she couldn’t try to run away again.

“Please. Just let me go,” she begged weakly.

“We just need to have a chat with you, then we’ll let you go, okay?” I asked, but she didn’t answer. “In the chapel, I promise we won’t hurt you.”

“I don’t,” Sonny added and she moved in closer towards me again.

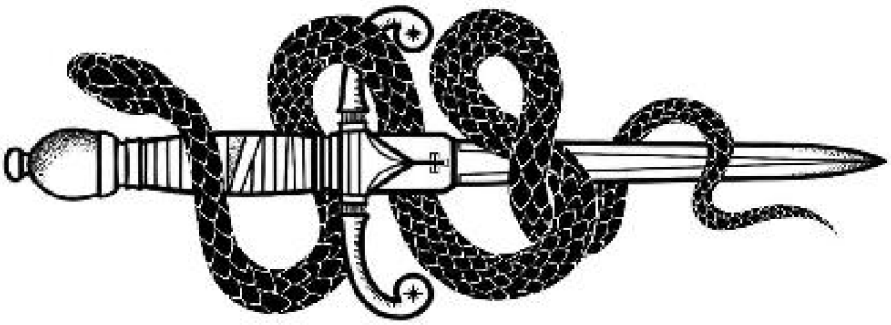
Smart.

At least she had that in her favor.

Sonny grabbed her by the back of the neck as if she was a fucking catfish and he’d reached his arm into a muddy hole to pull her out. She gasped and let out a pained cry but didn’t fight once she felt how much stronger his hold was.

Fighting was futile when it came to Sonny.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

I threw her inside once we'd entered the chapel and she fell to the ground.

There was something about this girl that wasn't right. I could see it. The second I saw her I felt it like a bolt of lightning in my gut. I just couldn't figure out what *it* was.

My gut never led me astray. Arlan always said it was the easiest, and best sign if you paid enough attention. So if I wanted out, if I wanted to find Frollo's secrets for him, then I needed to investigate every option. A mysterious girl breaking into our chapel and hiding in the woods for hours instead of heading back to campus?

That was right at the top of my list of suspicious shit.

"Jeez dude, chill," Felix told me, not bothering to lower his voice or hide the scowl formed on his face. "She's the fucking victim here, remember."

"Is she now?" I asked, looking directly at her, crossing my arms over my chest. "What's your name?" I asked the silver haired girl puddled on my

floor, but she didn’t look up or answer. “I am not either of my brothers. I don’t know what you did to Corvin to make him do *that* to you, and I don’t have the patience that Felix here has. I’ll ask you one more time, and you *will* regret it if you don’t answer me. What’s your name?”

“Romina,” she said softly.

“Romina what?”

“Just Romina.” She shook her head, refusing to meet my gaze.

She was the kind of pretty that I’d only read about in books, the kind that could never get transferred into real life. She was wretchedly filthy, disgusting. So how the fuck was she so stunning? It was entirely too bothersome.

The kind of coincidence that could only be planned.

A distraction.

A trap.

“Okay Just Romina, what were you doing in my brother’s room?” Felix asked her, getting down on one knee in front of her.

Fucking hell.

I could see the look in his eyes exactly for what it fucking was.

His next hyper fixation.

I didn’t give a fuck what he planned on doing with her, as long as we got our shit under control. And right now, it was far from that. If Claüde Frollo found sufficient evidence to get us expelled, he’d get to keep his funding *and* we’d lose out on everything that was meant to be ours.

She didn’t answer or bother to look back up. I sighed again, the weight of the entire day coming down on me.

“Romina,” I commanded in a stern tone and she lifted her head to look at me, eyes wide and ready to listen.

The corner of my lip turned up involuntarily.

She was a quick learner.

“I-I-I didn’t think there was anyone living here,” she said looking down again.

“I don’t accept lies Romina, you have one more chance,” I warned her and she crossed her arms over her knees and bowed her head down.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Felix said in a hushed and gentle tone, fully kneeling down at her side.

He stroked his fingers through her hair.

At first she flinched at the touch, but in the end she didn’t oppose his petting. She cried, he soothed. It was like that for almost half an hour.

The sound of my feet impatiently tapping on the marble floor echoed out, and she looked up, a nervous expression painted on her face.

“Do you want Sonny to go away, Romina? Do you want to talk just to me?” he asked, making me roll my eyes with annoyance but she lifted her head up and nodded.

Fucking great.

“I’m not leaving,” I protested and Felix cut me a sharp look, “I’ll sit over there at best.” I pointed to the single pew that we’d left in the chapel.

It was the only one that was salvageable from before we renovated it. Felix begged me to keep it. Apparently, he was having some sort of moment about preserving old shit. We pushed it against a wall and surprisingly it didn’t look too bad.

He whispered something in her ear I couldn’t make out, and she gave him a soft smile and nodded her head. He wiped her tears and helped her stand before he shepherded her over to our brand new couch, disregarding the fact

she was literally filthy and covered in whatever the fuck she'd been rolling all over in those woods.

I winced when she sat down, doing my best to contain my twitching upper lip.

"I'll order one of those little steam cleaners from The Nile, it'll come in the morning." He winked at me.

"I will literally slit your fucking throat if you don't stop ordering shit from them." I scowled at him and he pressed his fingers to his lips to shush me.

He directed his attention back to her and murmured too softly for me to hear anything. She didn't speak, she seemed to be answering his questions by nodding or shaking her head. She had these giant, beady, blue anime-like eyes that stared up at him like he was some sort of protector here to save her.

She didn't need to be looking at him like that.

He was weak enough to let someone like her outfox him into losing his heart with a few bats of those giant eyelashes.

Felix was the youngest, but because of Corvin's medical condition, he'd found himself as the most fit Escura to head their household. Not that it fucking mattered anymore. The whole idea that the Satanic Shrine would ever be what it used to be was laughable. A bunch of fucking orphans with no one but an old man with no blood ties to us who decided to raise us. He was supposed to shape us into the men he wanted us to become for the sake of carrying out his legacy. Keep the rituals and traditions going for the rest of the followers.

A fucking joke.

There was no denying the magic was real, or arguing that it wasn't powerful and that it didn't control us. It did. But to think tens of thousands of members would pay any attention to us was insane. We were just fucking kids.

Arlan was convinced it wouldn't matter and that after we performed our ascension rituals the covenant would only see their leader. With his daughter dead and gone, he was really just putting all his cards into one basket. I knew his rituals like the back of my hand, to be fair I knew more than just his rituals. I had studied them all. Every sigil, every lore in that grimoire.

But I didn't know if I wanted it.

I didn't want anything.

Unlike Felix I had no desire, no urge, no need to claim anything for myself. There was nothing that kept me going other than the sheer need to live in spite of the asshole who made me. I went through the motions.

I wore my human costume.

I played along.

"I'll be right back," he told her, striding over to me.

He looked back at her. She was still hunched in, wrapping her arms over her bent knees and pressing them against her chest.

I didn't speak, I just waited.

"She said she's not a student," he told me quietly.

Interesting.

"Or maybe she's trying to not get in trouble…" I narrowed my eyes at her, wondering what the hell the deal with this girl was.

"There's no way she came out here on her own, no one could get out here by foot."

“Unless she was already here,” I told him.

“Reesa didn’t know who she was,” he mentioned.

“Who?”

“Doesn’t matter. No one had ever seen her around here. And what the fuck is she wearing? She looks like the ghost of Christmas past,” he added.

“Ebenezer,” I corrected him.

“What?” He asked me.

“Ebenezer is the one wearing the nightgown, not the ghost.” I explained, and he shook his head at me like he couldn’t believe I was getting into the semantics of it right now.

“I don’t even know who the fuck you are sometimes.” He shook his head at me and made his way back over to the girl.

Romina.

He whispered something else in her ear and she nodded again and a small smile softened around her lips. Felix was good like that, good at convincing others he wasn’t as dangerous as he really was. But once he’d sunk his teeth into you, it was over.

We were different like that.

I took what I wanted.

He made you think you wanted it too.

He stood up and stepped over to the fridge and I looked her up and down, studying this brand-new creature in front of me. Unbuttoning my collar, I leaned back resting my arms on the pew while I watched Felix walk back from the freezer, holding a pint of ice cream and two spoons.

They sat in silence sharing it, taking turns digging their spoons into the ice cream and shoveling it into their mouths. Every few minutes or so she would break down, whimper a bit and then sob again. Felix would squeeze

her hand to comfort her and after a few moments she would just pick up the spoon to continue the cycle. Once he got up to throw it away, I stood.

“Romina,” I said and she whipped her neck back to look at me, that nervous fear still so visibly printed into her stare.

“Up.” Her eyes searched for Felix but he’d disappeared from the main room, probably to check on his brother. “He’s busy. You get me. Now stand, you’re dirtying up my house.”

She didn’t move,

I stepped closer until I stood just above her, her eyes full of a strange bewilderment I’d never seen anywhere else, until now. I gripped her hair in my hand and pulled her up to her feet, ignoring her cries of pain.

“Ah!”

“I’m not a fan of repeating myself. Got it?”

She was a fragile little thing.

Timid and weak.

“Y-yes,” she trembled out, looking up at me.

She might have been filthy but her skin still looked soft to the touch. Her bright blue eyes glimmered with twice as much life than mine could have ever attempted to show, dull and opaque. Her stare gave her innocence away, telling far more secrets than mine ever could.

I thought it was fear I saw, but the more I looked up close I noticed something else, a curiosity, a hunger inside her. I rubbed my thumb along the underside of her jaw, and I lifted her chin up so I could take a better look at her face.

“When’s the last time you took a bath?” I twisted my nose at her.

She tried to recoil from my touch, but I tightened my hold on her hair, forcing a whine out from her.

“I d-don’t know.” She shook her head and my face twisted up in confusion even more.

“Where do you need us to take you Romina? Is there someone you want us to call?” I asked her, trying to be as gentle as Felix but unable to strip the commanding tone from my voice.

“I-I don’t know what you mean,” she stuttered out and I exhaled, quickly losing my patience.

“What are you doing here?” I asked her and she shook her head again.

“Answer me.” I cut through.

“No.”

“What are you doing in my house?” I asked again.

“*Your* house?” she asked with a dramatic flair like she couldn’t believe what I was saying.

“It’s not Frollo’s house anymore.” I loosened my grip on her hair without letting go, rubbing my fingers along the sore spots where I’d been pulling too tight.

She relaxed into my hand, leaning into my touch.

This girl was pliable as hell.

I fucking loved it.

“Please let me go,” she said in a barely inaudible volume.

“And where will you go once I do?” I brought my face as close to hers as possible and waited for her response.

Her eyes wrinkled from how tightly she forced them shut, as if she’d disappear if she squeezed hard enough.

“Tsk. One more chance. Where do you belong Romina?” I asked her. Her eyes darted down and she shrank away from my hold, back into the couch.

Felix appeared at the front of the hallway and crossed his arms over his chest. “Mina,” he beckoned her and her chin turned sharply towards him.

He tilted his chin towards the end of the dark hall and she darted over to his side without looking back at me.

*Mina?*

He directed her to a stool under the marble countertop island and she sat while he reached into the refrigerator.

“Are you feeding her?” I asked and he frowned, looking back at me from the sandwich he was making.

“She said she was hungry.” He shrugged, walking over to me. “So, we’re in agreement right? Not a fucking a ghost,” he said with a type of seriousness that only made me roll my eyes.

This wasn’t how spirits worked, he knew better than to entertain such ridiculous thoughts. I already knew Frollo had a hand in this somehow. He had a hand in everything. It wasn’t enough that he’d exploited the persecution of Lolita Escura and was personally responsible for her death. But he had used it as a badge to advance himself.

He was just a headmaster then, a clergyman, but he led the people on a holy crusade against Lolita. She was arrested, tried, and found guilty within the span of six days. The execution came before the week ended.

“What if those myths are kind of true?” Felix asked me, bringing me out of my chaotic thoughts.

“She’s not a fucking ghost!” I snapped and he shook his head at me.

“I mean, what if she’s…Frollo's? She keeps saying she doesn’t have anywhere to go. Something isn’t adding up.” He rubbed the stubble on his chin while he thought about what he said.

I didn’t need to think about it.

It made plenty of sense.

I headed for the hallway and pushed open my bedroom door, digging in my closet through unpacked boxes to find what I knew was surely there, under all the bullshit. I pulled the long rope out and walked back into the Mass room.

Before she could turn back to look at me I had already wrapped the rope around her chest and arms, not just once, but twice over. I looped it into a knot and pulled her off the stool with a yank and she yelped loudly before falling onto the floor on her chest.

“What are you doing?” Felix asked me, that scowled engraved deep on his forehead anytime I did something less than gentle to this girl.

He helped her up, caressing her face with the back of his hand softly.

“Getting the answers we need so we can get the fuck out of here,” I told him, pulling on the rope once again. “Let’s go, Romina. Let’s see if Daddy will claim you.”

“W-What?” She asked with a trembling voice.

“Lie to me, I dare you.” I held my face just a mere centimeter away from hers.

She didn’t respond but she didn’t look away, some sort of seed of bravery growing in her spine. It was enough to confirm my suspicions.

She didn’t challenge me and walked behind a few steps while I dragged her with the rope. I ignored Felix’s protests while he slung the words savage and monster at me for dragging the girl a mile across campus barefoot.

I wasn’t the monster here.

No, that was another man.

*OceanofPDF.com*

The angry one pulled on the rope anytime I walked too slow for his liking. My legs trembled beneath me, not from exhaustion but from fear and uncertainty about what was to come. How could he have known what Father Frollo was to me? And what would that mean for me now that the ones he called heathens had me right in their clutches?

My throat burned something fierce, and my neck hurt from the feel of the wind grazing it. I didn’t bother pleading and begging these cruel men to let me go. Not only because I wasn’t sure if I could make out the words, but because I knew they wouldn’t listen. The one who introduced himself as Felix seemed kind, but Father Frollo had always said it was the kind ones who tricked you, used you so that they could fulfill their own dark purposes.

I saw a sweetness in his brown eyes.

Was it tainted with something more sinister?

Somehow that was more frightening than the one who didn’t bother to hide his barred teeth from me.

One was a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

The other was a crow waiting to peck at the meat hanging from my bones after the one with sharp teeth finished ripping me apart.

My feet were sore and blistering, not just from this walk but from running aimlessly through the woods without bothering to mind the thorns and stickers that sharply dug into my heels with every step.

I was regretting all of my decisions.

Once we came to a stop, I stood there, the smallest I’d ever felt in my entire existence, toppled by the frame of the gargantuan cathedral and all its golden divinity. I’d never once stepped foot inside, it was not meant for me, as Father Frollo would say. Nevermind that I was to stay hidden and undiscovered by the staff and students here, but a creature of sin like me was never meant to tarnish the halls and floors of this devout monstrosity.

There was something rather obtuse about creating a single place where God could be found. I had never been meant to step inside here according to him. Never to find God. I don’t think God had been looking for me anyway.

It was gloriously macabre.

Decorated with nearly faceless representations of the Godly men depicted as Saints in all of Father Frollo’s sacred books. The holy kings stood over twenty feet tall, bathed in gold as they looked down over the campus with their critical eyes. They passed judgment on anyone the headmaster deemed unworthy of God’s love and forgiveness. Their sculpted bodies lined the building all the way to the center, where a grand arch opened into the cathedral. Over the arch, way up high, was a balcony.

“ARCHBISHOP!” The bellow came from the one with drawings covering all of his skin, even down to the tips of his fingers.

I felt my legs weakening beneath me and my heart pounded inside of my throat. Would Father Frollo expose the truth and risk everything he’d worked to build while keeping me hidden? Was I worthy enough to protect? Would he save me from these heathens?

“Come claim your millstone holy man.” The deep boom of his voice echoed from his chest, and I shrank into the smallest version of myself.

Then he appeared, wearing white robes in the center of the balcony, high above us. A depiction of a savior. Something fluttered in my chest, some hope that he might rescue me from them.

“What’s the meaning of this madness Santorini?” Though his voice was nowhere near commanding or as loud as the one who bound me, he showed no fear.

“Dies Irae old man. Time to answer for your transgressions,” he shouted, tugging the rope hard enough to pull me forward, spilling me onto my hands and knees.

A few nuns made their way outside to better see the commotion up close, and students slowly congregated at the front of the dormitory. Father Frollo’s eyes widened in recognition at the sight of me but he quickly schooled his expression to mask any sort of acknowledgement that would give him away.

I had my answer without a single word being uttered.

The wolves were at his door, and he would not sacrifice a single scratch on his skin to keep me safe.

“I do not know what you speak of boy, end this foolishness now. Back to your rooms, everyone,” he shouted from the balcony and the boy named

Santorini threw the rope down at my body.

“You refuse to claim her?” He sneered at him.

“Preposterous. Claim her as what? Back to your rooms! All of you! This madness ends now, how dare you call upon me in the middle of the night like this.” Frollo denied any connection to me, cutting a sharp pain into my chest from his betrayal.

“This isn’t your pet then? You deny sending her to spy on my brothers and me? You deny sending her into our home?” The anger in his voice let me know he held no reservations about mistreating someone he believed to be a threat to him.

That much was clear.

“This is no student of mine. Let us call the police and have her taken away for trespassing. This stray must be a long way from home. Off to bed everyone, nothing to see here,” he called out again as he pulled out a phone.

“If you think you can make this go away by denying your sins, you have another thing coming, Archbishop. I’m going to make you sit through confession before I bury you in a grave so deep even your ghost won’t come back to haunt us,” he spat out before beckoning Felix over with a tilt of his chin towards me.

“You *will* regret threatening me, boy,” Father Frollo yelled, more of his own fear slipping out through his false bravado.

“I’d love to see it,” he challenged him from far below. “Call off your police swine, I’ll deal with the girl myself.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Frollo asked with outrage.

“It means, if you won’t claim her as your pet, then I’ll be making her mine. I hope you haven’t entrusted too many secrets to her, she’ll be

screaming them all out with my cock in between her legs.” He smirked, turning his back to Father Frollo and walking back in the other direction.

“I will not allow illegal vagabonds to take up space in my campus. I will send her to the poorhouses immediately.” My stomach sank and I felt the world uncontrollably spinning underneath me.

He would do it. He would send me away to clear anything that would link me back to him if it kept his name untarnished.

“She’s not your problem anymore old man. If it’s legitimacy you want I’ll have my people send you her registration papers by morning. I’m sure the church board will make an exception for her once they see who will pay her tuition. I’ll make you regret every lie you’ve spilled from that venomous mouth of yours yet,” the blue-eyed heathen said without looking back.

The crowd of students was now circling us and looking up at their headmaster in confusion. Felix gave me a sympathetic look before pulling me up by my underarms, but in a quick move he slung me over his shoulders. We walked about halfway back to the chapel before he set me back down on the ground. I looked around and noticed the darker haired one was already out of sight, nowhere to be found.

“Sonny is probably already back at the chapel,” he explained, practically reading my thoughts before I had a chance to fully form them myself. “Have you been crying?” he asked, his thumb grazing the outside corners of my eyes where the tears would pool together before gravity took them from my face.

“Why do you care?” I turned my face away, unsure why I even said that.

I felt hollow.

As empty on the inside as I was alone out here in the real world.

What was it about me that was so unlovable? Why was there no one who would stand by my side and claim me as theirs?

He sighed, kneeling in front of me and wiping the remnants of the tears from my eyes before pressing his lips to the top of my head. He took the ropes off of me, unwinding them before wrapping them around his own arms.

“I can carry you the rest of the way if your feet hurt,” he offered but I shook my head, unsure if I wanted to owe him anything.

That was the only thing I truly knew about the way the world worked.

Every charity had a price, every action needed payment.

There was no kindness Claüde Frollo had ever done that didn’t require some sort of recompense from me. If the headmaster was a servant of God, what would it mean if I was indebted to men whose souls belonged to the Devil?

No, I walked the rest of the mile pretending each step that the rocks weren’t cutting into my heels or that the dirt wasn’t burning the freshly made blisters. He followed behind me, making sure to pace himself slow enough so that I didn’t need to rush. Maybe he wasn’t that thoughtful, maybe it was just his gait.

I didn’t realize that I’d been crying the entire time, until we’d arrived back to what was once *my* home but somehow was now *theirs.* I looked down to find my nightgown stained with my tears and my face far too wet.

Felix opened the door to the chapel and Sonny stood there, arms crossed, with a look that said he was disappointed that we’d made him wait this long. I stepped back but he reached forward, wrapping his hand around my arm and yanking me towards him.

“Are you going to tell me the truth?” he asked through gritted teeth.

“The truth about what?” I asked, doing my best to steady my voice and find some sense of bravery inside of me.

“The truth about you and Frollo. What are you to him?” he asked me, using his finger to keep my gaze on him.

I examined his face for the first time, his eyes were a bright blue, reminiscent of an iceberg—sharp, cold, but full of depth. His skin was pale, and his black hair was draped over his eyes almost as if every strand knew its designated place on his head by memory. His jaw was strong, and it was emphasized more by the paintings that covered his throat. There was one on his face though that stood out. The words ‘Son of Satan’ were inked above his left eyebrow, right along the bone as it arched down by his temple.

He was terrifyingly beautiful.

“Already having dirty thoughts about me, Pet?” He tsked loudly before letting a sinister smirk paint over his face.

I pushed his finger off my chin and looked down, fighting the heat that rushed to my face and hoping to God that he couldn’t actually read my mind.

“He hasn’t asked me to do anything.” I told him the truth, but somehow his facial expression seemed less content.

“I ran you a bath, you’re fucking filthy.” His tone dropped to a colder one again, and he walked away from the door towards the dark hallway. “Undress her, I don’t want her tracking dirt into the house.”

I looked at Felix, widening my eyes and recoiling as he reached for me. “I’m not going to hurt you,” he promised.

Could I believe him?

I had absolutely nothing anymore, but apparently, I had the word of this man who’d done nothing but feed me ice cream and a sandwich without

knowing anything about me.

“Why are you crying again?” he asked me. “Is it because my brother hurt you?”

I shook my head and then nodded, confused and unsure of what it was I was feeling. I was hurt in so many ways it felt like I was a scar ripping up from the inside to form an entirely new wound.

“I can’t help you if you don’t talk to me.” He pulled me closer and I looked up at him, partly shocked at his chosen words,

“You want to help me?” I asked him, my voice still scratchy from my encounter with his brother.

“We didn’t let Frollo have you taken away. Doesn’t that mean something?” he asked me gently tugging at the bottom of my nightgown and I relaxed my arms away from my chest.

“Where was he going to send me?” I asked him. He lifted the dress up and I had no choice but to lift my arms up so it could slip over my head.

“Somewhere that wouldn’t have been kind to you.”

“And you will be?” I asked.

He looked at me with something that reminded me of hunger. His gaze dropped, examining the rest of my body and he bit his lips down into a flat line like he was fighting back laughter.

“What?” I asked him, but he shook his head.

“Go to the bathroom, Sonny is waiting for you.” He pointed to the hallway and walked off shaking his head.

I inched my way across what was once the Mass Hall, where dozens of pews stood in a row in front of a choir and an altar. Now it was a well-lit kitchen with lots of steel and shiny black surfaces.

“What the fuck is that?” Sonny spat out right as I walked into the bathroom.

He sat on the edge of a golden clawfoot tub nearly filled to the brim. I instinctively reached to cover my chest, but for some reason it didn’t feel as uncomfortable with him like all the other times Father Frollo had watched me bathe.

I shuddered away the thought, looking to see he was pointing at my undergarments.

“My underwear?” I asked, not sure what else he could be referring to.

“That is not underwear,” the corner of his lip curled up then quickly flattened out again. “Remove *those*—” he waved his hands at my underwear, “whatever they are.” I shook my head at him, and he stood up too quickly and I jerked back.

“Pet, I don’t do well repeating myself, so be a good girl and *listen*. Can you do that for me?” There was a pseudo-sweetness to his voice that betrayed everything this man exuded.

Not a snake, but a scorpion, waiting for you to come to him versus striking blindly.

I pulled at the waistband of my underwear, stepping out of the knee length cotton fabric before dropping it to the ground. His face twisted while his eyes stayed fixed on the sight of them on the floor. He drew his gaze back up to my eyes, not lingering nearly as long as his so-called brother did.

“Why are you so dirty?”

“I-I-I w-was in the woods.”

He narrowed his eyes at me like he could see through my attempt to withhold the truth, but it was believable enough that he wouldn’t call my bluff.

“Get in,” he said, tipping his chin down to the tub.

I inched towards it, nervously, taking my time. Before I could get my leg over the tub fully, I fell into the water, splashing so much of it out of the tub and onto him. His nostrils flared but that was the only sign of disapproval he showed.

“Did Frollo send you here?” he asked, using a colorful ball of mesh to scrub my skin with a sudsy soap that smelled like fruits and sunshine.

“No,” I told him, looking right into his eyes hoping he could see the truth.

He seemed appeased.

Father Frollo’s baths were always cold, and the soap didn’t have a smell. This was a stark comparison to what I was accustomed to and once he began to scrub at my legs a noise crawled its way out of me from the depths of my chest and through my throat.

Our eyes met.

I bit my lip between my teeth, pressing my eyebrows together. He let that mischievous curl tease its way out from the corner of his lip again. He was confusing. I’d known him for an entire two hours and found that he could be angry, very angry, and sometimes amused. He pulled his hand out of the bath and rolled his sleeves up further until they touched his elbow.

“If I find out you’re lying to me, Romina,” he said, shoving his hand back into the bath and using the ball of mesh against my most private area forcing a loud gasp from my lips as I tried to back up.

But I was already pressed to the back of the tub, nowhere to run to, and his hand was there, using the sponge to clean me far too intimately. “I’ll fucking kill you myself, you understand?” he asked, moving his fingers in a circle sending a flood of heat down to my core.

I gasped loudly once again, confused yet somehow desperate for more of it.

“I said, do you understand?” he asked, pinching the rosebud shaped mess of nerves between my legs, forcing another surge of pleasure to ripple through my center.

I yelped out a yes with the sizzle of another shockwave, but for a second I wasn’t sure if I was even answering his question, or another one of my own.

“Good girl. Now stand.” Despite how positively terrifying he was, there was something about the way he praised me that filled up something in my chest.

I shuddered, pushing away every vile insult that threatened to surface. They had been permanently welded into my mind over the years by the archbishop.

His efforts at rolling his sleeves were moot, they were soaked nearly to his shoulder now but he didn’t seem to mind. His dark gray pants were drenched in several spots from when I splashed my way in. He held his hand out for me and I took it, despite his most recent threat to end my life.

I believed him.

But I hadn’t lied, so I wasn’t scared.

He pulled me out of the tub and wrapped a towel around me.

“Get some rest, Pet. We have class bright and early tomorrow,” he said, not hiding the resentment in his voice.

“We?” I asked, unsure if I’d heard him correctly.

“Yeah, we. I’m not leaving you to snoop through our things. I don’t know what your deal is, but I don’t trust you. You can play the innocent little virginal girl that Frollo coached you to be before he sent you here to tempt

us, but it does nothing for me.” His eyes darkened to a stormy blue and I shrunk back, wrapping the towel around me tighter.

“Father Frollo doesn’t want me in class with the other students,” I trembled out with a shaky voice.

His face turned brighter at the reveal that there *was* a connection between us, despite what Frollo had said to him.

“Father Frollo doesn’t have the authority you think he does,” he said, leaning closer into my ear and whispering, “And someday he’ll have even less.” He crossed his arms over his chest raising his eyebrows high into his forehead like he was waiting for my reaction.

“If you don’t trust me, why are you telling me this?” I didn’t bother hiding the confusion from my voice.

“Maybe it’s a test. Maybe I want to know if you can be *my* good little pet instead of his,” he told me and I scoffed at his audacity.

“I don’t belong to you.”

“I bought this chapel, and everything that came inside of it. Which means I own you,” he said, towering over me as he forced me to shrink down.

“That’s—that’s not how that works. You can’t *own* a person.” I trembled and he laughed.

“Then leave…” He smirked something sinister while crossing his arms over his chest, waiting for my response.

Now he was calling my bluff.

I was lost, alone, with no sanctuary to turn to.

“Why would you even want me?” I asked, not bothering to wipe the tears that flowed down my cheeks, more from anger than anything flowing through me.

“Because I don’t trust you,” he gritted out. “There’s a reason daddy Frollo won’t take you back, and I’m itching to find out what that is. And if he tossed you out like trash and claims he has no idea who you are, which one of the two of you is lying, I wonder?” He grazed his tongue over the edges of his top teeth as he stared me down.

“I-I d-d-don’t know,” I stammered out nervously, too scared to let the truth out just yet.

What would he do with it anyway?

“Does it hurt? Feeling like you’re less than trash?” He leaned in closer as his voice took a vicious tone and the tears pooled in my eyes before dripping past the threshold of my eyelashes.

“It’s all I’ve ever known.” I closed my eyes and turned my chin away.

I’d never gotten a chance to be anything other than what Frollo demanded of me.

Even if these heathens were cruel, brutal monsters, I was raised by the worst monster of them all. If I could understand and survive the viciousness of the Pius Claüde Frollo, then I could survive these men too.

The tears rolled down my face once again and he tsked at me, shaking his head from side to side. “He picked a good one didn’t he? That’s the kind of shit that would have Felix eating out of the palm of your hand. Doesn’t work on me though.” He walked out of the bathroom, leaving me wrapped in the towel, unsure of where to go or if I was supposed to follow.

I’d never felt so disoriented.

I had no internal compass to guide me or tell me where to head next.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I was sitting by my brother's bedside while he slept, when Sonny barged into Corvin's room with a scowl on his face.

"She's your problem for the night, I'm done." He adjusted himself so quickly it was almost unnoticeable, but not for me.

"Oh yeah, is she causing trouble for you Santorini?" I chuckled out and he growled under his breath.

"I don't trust that girl, Corvin clearly didn't either." He gestured to my brother, and I shook my head in disapproval.

"Don't bring him into this, he wasn't even conscious when he met her." I walked out of the room to find the bathroom door across the hall open, her tiny frame standing in front of the tub with a towel wrapped around her.

"Mina," I called to her using the nickname I'd decided to gift her with, and she shifted her gaze from the floor up to me. "Come on."

I opened the door to my bedroom and she entered slowly, looking around and taking in everything inside the room. It was still relatively bare, most of

my things were still in boxes aside for clothes and school necessities. Sonny was mostly unpacked, but only because his personality type simply couldn't stand to live that way. I knew my attention span didn't allow me to believe I'd be here long.

I pulled out a t-shirt and handed it to her, taking the time to admire the landscape of her body while she threw the oversized shirt over her head. She was a little too skinny, and with how fast she scarfed down that sandwich earlier I had to wonder in the back of my mind if that was by choice.

"Why are you being so nice to me?" she asked me with a shaky voice.

"Would you prefer it if I wasn't? I can get Sonny back in here…" I asked and she actually took a moment to think, almost garnishing a laugh from me.

"People aren't nice unless they want something," she said.

"Oh I definitely want something from you," I assured her with a smirk and she raised both eyebrows high up. "Just not quite yet."

I dropped to the bed, leaning onto the headboard with my arms behind my back.

"Come here," I beckoned. "I won't bite."

She exhaled out heavily and took her time inching my way. She was hesitating so I tapped the bed in a friendly way.

"You won't hurt me?" she asked, plopping her ass down on the bed.

"Who's hurt you?"

She hesitated.

"Who's hurt you Romina?" I hardened my voice but she kept her gaze down.

The seconds ticked by on my wristwatch. She brought her hand up to her throat and I could see my twin's fingerprints making themselves known in a beautiful shade of blue.

"Don't answer that." I exhaled heavily.

"You won't hurt me?" she asked again, her eyes glazed over with shine as they met mine.

"Did Frollo send you here because of us?" I asked and she shook her head. "Then no. I won't hurt you." I hooked my arm around her waist and pulled her into me as I slid down and laid in the bed.

She took a few nervous breaths but eventually settled into place, her back pressed to my chest, exhaling in sync.

I woke up to the feeling of her body quaking against mine with each heavy sob that left her mouth. It was the kind of painful cry that could dissolve the strongest of armor and seep through to your soul like acid rain. I pulled her into my chest tighter and her breathing hitched like she didn't expect me to have woken up.

"I-I'm sorry," she apologized with a hiccuped cry.

"Who hurt you this badly? I'll take you home if it's what you want," I whispered into her ear but she shook her head, sobbing louder. "Do you have a home? Do you want to go back to Frollo?"

Her body tensed and she held her breath.

“Tell me what he’s done. Maybe we’ll kill him for you.” I would kill him for me, but she didn’t need to know that.

“Why would you say something like that?” she asked, still frozen in my arms.

“Because something about you crying in my arms doesn’t feel right. Feels like I should be doing more, you don’t feel it too?”

She didn’t answer. I traced my fingers along the side of her arm for a few minutes, calming her down until her tears dried and her breathing returned normal.

“The other one…” She spoke out of nowhere and after a few minutes said, “He said I was trash.”

“Sonny? He’s… complicated. It would probably be for the best if you tried to steer clear of his path.”

“He’ll hurt me?” she asked, turning her cheek to try to look back at me.

“He will.”

She exhaled heavily like she’d been holding it in.

“Why?”

“Because you're either not on Sonny’s radar or you are. And if he decides you are, then I might not be able to protect you.” I tucked her hair behind her ear. “The world is a terrible, fucked up, horrible place full of atrocities and monsters.” I pulled her chin up so I could look at her better. “We are no different.”

I reached out to caress the side of her face, and the scowl that had been deeply carved into her forehead relaxed a bit.

“You don’t seem so bad,” she whispered.

“I don’t seem so good either.” I ran my hand up the shirt she wore, feeling the soft smoothness of her flesh under my touch.

Her skin was soft, burning hot and I couldn’t stop myself from reaching further up and palming her breast. She sucked in a loud breath as I ran my thumb over the hardened bead of her nipple. She looked shell shocked, but she wasn’t turning me away and there was something too magnetizing about her for me to worry whether this was right or wrong.

I slid my hand over her bare legs. Her eyes widened at the feel of my fingers dancing through the apex of her thighs and rubbing against her most sensitive parts. I slid my fingers down further just enough to feel her arousal starting to seep out.

She let out a soft mewl from her lips. I took it as encouragement to continue rubbing my fingers back and forth over her rapidly slickening cunt, keeping my eyes focused on hers. Her breathing hitched, chest heaving up and down while she relished in her pleasure quietly. I took it as a challenge, slowing my movements until I could feel a physical need from her, a need for me to give her more.

Finally her resolve broke.

“Mmm.” She finally relinquished her satisfaction, biting her lip as if it would tame the confusion burning through her expression.

Had Frollo’s little toy never taken the time to play with herself?

I moved my fingers in precise circles, finding the right rhythm she needed for her release. With a sudden sharp inhale her hand reached up to clasp my forearms, and her nails dug into my flesh. She closed her eyes and shook her head from side to side before finally letting go and letting out a cry of pleasure that had my cock begging for its own turn.

“What was that?” she asked between heavy breaths.

“I made you come. Was that the first time for you?” I asked her and her expression changed into one of astonishment.

She opened her mouth to answer but closed it instead.

“Why?” She was still breathing heavily.

I continued to rub my fingers back and forth, toying with her.

“I guess the better question is, why did you let me?” I asked, turning her into putty with just my hand.

“It felt good. Should I not have?”

I didn’t actually give her a chance to answer. I pulled her by her hips and she granted me a yelp before I straddled her over my head.

“W-wait,” she breathed out before my tongue lapped right through her center.

The sharp inhale of air she sucked in through her throat was so audible that my dick painfully strained inside my pants. I didn’t usually sleep in anything but underwear, but it felt like the only way to keep myself from stabbing her insides while she slept. I couldn’t keep my hands off of her and I’d just met her.

I’d settle for letting her fuck my face.

I could already tell that if I couldn’t keep my cock out of the equation I was going to be fucked when it came to this girl.

She melted onto me, relaxing her weight while I tongue fucked her into oblivion. I rubbed her ass roughly while guiding her hips in small circular motions. I plunged my tongue deep inside her before taking hold of her clit between my teeth and sucking with no abandon.

She cried perfect screams of nonsense with her second climax. Taking nearly twice as long to wind down and absentmindedly running her fingers through my hair like she’d somehow always done it before. It was oddly familiar. Once her high dropped she tried to climb off of me like she was ashamed of what I’d just done to her.

Purity culture was wild.

I chuckled, tugging her by the wrist and pulling her back into my chest, securing my little spoon in place and dealing with the pain of the hardest boner of my entire life digging into her back.

She was already awake by the time I opened my eyes, laying on her back with her gaze fixed onto the ceiling. Her hands clasped at her stomach like a little doll who'd been put back inside her box.

"How long have you been awake?" I asked her, and she turned her head to the side to glance at me.

"I don't think I really fell asleep," she confessed and my eyebrows automatically furrowed together.

"Are you scared of me? I wouldn't have hurt you."

"I don't think anyone can hurt me anymore," she said with a sigh and I immediately needed to know what that meant.

"Was Frollo hurting you?"

She didn't answer but the pain was ripping her apart so visibly anyone could see it for what it was. She was broken.

And her shattered pieces called out to me as if they knew we fit together perfectly. My regret came crashing down with the loud braying of my alarm reminding me I had twenty minutes to get my ass on the field or Father Thomas would have me running laps all practice instead.

“I have soccer practice. You’ll have to go to class with Sonny this morning.” I sighed as soon as I said the words, realizing that I wasn’t sure I trusted the sadistic bastard to not hurt this girl, but the only other option was even less safe.

“I can’t stay here? I promise I won’t leave.”

But I knew the truth…she had nowhere to go.

“No, my brother isn’t reliable right now. If he wakes up while either of us are gone…I don’t know that I trust him around you,” I told her before I fully registered every word she had said. “Do you want to tell me where you live and why you don’t want to go back?”

She bit her lips anxiously and I decided not to press it. She’d open up when she was ready to tell me what fresh hell she crawled out of before coming through Corvin’s window.

“You can tell me when you’re ready.” I kissed her forehead before rolling out of bed and she let out a breath filled with relief.

Turning on the faucet I scooped my hands under to wet my hair before I decided to give up on fixing any of the random rogue waves. I tucked my shin-guards under the jade-green knee-high socks before slipping on the white soccer shorts and the jade-green matching jersey.

“I know I told you to stay away from him, but it looks like that’s already not an option. Just don’t lie to him, okay? He shouldn’t be too hard to get along with otherwise,” I warned her, giving her one last look before slipping on my chuck taylors and carrying my cleats out the door.

I thought I needed a hobby, something to keep me occupied so all that manic energy had something to focus on that wasn’t as destructive and harmful as letting my intrusive thoughts consume me. But even as I ran

ladders across that soccer field while sweating down to my underwear, I couldn't get the girl with the silver hair out of my head.

She occupied my mind despite the ball coming to me and scoring three goals. Father Thomas hollered and smiled from ear to ear at the idea that I'd be sending them to regionals at the end of the season.

I hoped like hell I wouldn't be here that long.

Even after practice, while I washed the sweat off of me in a cold shower, I still thought about her. Would Sonny have fed her breakfast? How was he going to explain her to the nuns in his classes today? What kind of fight was the old bag of bones going to put up over this?

I thought about Frollo.The girl definitely knew him, the look in her eyes told me everything I needed to know. She knew the Archbishop, and it seemed like she was more scared of him than Sonny.

And that said a lot.

The Archbishop had leverage, but he didn't have *power*. Not unless he could convince the people that whatever he was lobbying for was the desire of God. The trick to his control was the undying allegiance of the masses who followed him without question.

That's how he was able to kill our mother.

He turned the entire country against her in the blink of an eye.

He could try his best to pretend like Romina's existence didn't bother him but we were going to make sure he acknowledged her presence. He was going to confess eventually, Sonny just needed to make it slow and painful first.

Dig that knife in before he turned it.

I sent a text over to him before heading over to the cathedral for my first lecture of the day.

**ME:** Are you being nice? How’s our new toy doing?

**SONNY**: Nice?

**ME:** Don’t forget to feed her, brush her hair, give her plenty of water and take her on a couple of walks so she doesn’t get stir crazy.

“Phones away in my class Mr. Escura,” Sister Sophia crooned out from her podium in the center of the behemoth lecture hall we sat in.

I had no beef with the old bird and she hadn’t given me a reason to hate her yet, despite being married to a God of lies and all that. I would respect her otherwise. Some of these nuns were only here so they could provide for their families, most teachers ended up becoming nuns when they realized it was the only way they could keep their jobs. Some weren’t willing to sacrifice their morals and fundamental beliefs, so they resorted to the poorhouses to work for the Nile like everyone else. Whether through labor for the conglomerate or as daycare providers for the many families hobbled in squalor.

And even that came out of their pay.

I stuffed my phone back into my pocket and I walked up the stairs to the top of the auditorium. I recognized the blonde chick from the dormitories and took the empty seat next to her.

“Did you find your mystery girl?” she whisper-yelled to me like I wasn’t already putting my things down next to her.

“Actually, I did. Did you miss the show last night?” I smirked, surprised that word hadn’t spread of the performance between Sonny and Frollo last night.

“Is that what the commotion was all about? I just thought another one of Frollo’s desperate little boys were crying for attention and begging for an A,” she said looking forward but before I could question on the intricacies of whatever the fuck that was, Sister Sophia smacked her ruler over her podium to quiet the chatter.

“Let’s pick up from where we left off yesterday shall we? Exodus. Who would care to read?”

I groaned, sinking into my seat and popping on some earbuds to drown out the sounds of mind melting indoctrination. Everywhere else in the world, people my age were getting to go to school to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, and scientists. I was here listening to a reading from the Bible.

It made me nauseous to think about how this country had once been the hope for so many. Once upon a time, immigrants and refugees came here for a better opportunity and a new life. Now, we were the immigrants, always trying to find a way out and a country who would take us in so that we could escape the reality of the new world.

**SONNY**: I can’t take her out of this chapel.

**ME:** Why not?

**SONNY:** In a fucking muddy nightgown?

“I need to borrow some clothes, can you drop by the chapel with a few things?”

“You’re not gonna fit in my clothes.”

“They’re not for me.”

“Oh shit! The ghost?” she squeaked out.

“If you can bring over a few things she can wear till we get her some proper clothes, I’d be grateful.”

“Sure, but I want to meet her,” she said like she was calling all the shots here.

**ME:** My new friend will be dropping by after class to help you with your problem. We can trade off after this lecture and I’ll bring her to the next class.

**SONNY:** No chance. I have Frollo in two hours, I’m bringing her. I want him to have to stare into her face and pretend like he doesn’t have a clue who she is.

**ME:** She’s not a spy. Be nice or I’ll come get her.

**SONNY:** Good luck, she looks better with my leash around her neck.

What the fuck did that mean?

My first lecture of the day ended, and I didn’t bother heading back to the chapel. I had fifteen minutes to grab a snack from a vending machine and head to the next lecture hall where Sister Sophia would likely already be punishing anyone who came in anything later than five minutes early. It didn’t even matter that this was the most tolerable lecture of the day.

Calculus.

Fucking calculus

God ruled everything here, and we were still doing fucking math.

*OceanofPDF.com*

When I was very little, Father Frollo brought me a video cassette of the movie Bambi. He said I needed to learn about life and death and he didn’t have the time or patience to explain it to me. For three years it was the only thing I had to entertain me in the belltower, unless I was watching the students below me, of course.

There was a scene right after he was born, where he walks with new legs and they are awkward and clumsy. He eyes the world with curiosity and an appetite for new knowledge that’s nearly insatiable.

I felt like Bambi right now.

My terror for the blue eyed one was starting to dull the longer he loomed over me with his angry stare. He looked at me like if he stared hard enough I’d somehow disappear. It would be easier if I could.

At some point in the night while I laid awake, I thought about every single moment that Father Frollo and I shared together. None of those

moments or memories brought a single feeling of joy. Instead most of my time with him had been dictated by either fear or loathing.

I was really taking in the chapel for the first time since they'd changed everything. Both the walls and the floor were a shiny black as well. There was a wall with nothing but upside-down crucifixes hanging from it and just below them was a table with a black cloth draped over it. Dozens of candles flickered pulling my attention in their direction.

He cleared his throat to bring it back to him.

Sonny looked like some sort of twisted angel, leaned back on the couch, boots resting on the table. He was wearing head to toe black, the only color on him coming from the bright red painting on his throat. He brushed his hair out of his eyes and gave me a menacing stare that didn't match the crooked smile on his lips.

It sent a shudder up my spine. He thought he was scaring me. So far this had been the most comfortable twenty four hours of my entire life and I never wanted this feeling to end. Felix said Sonny just needed the truth from me, I could do that.

"Did you let Felix fuck you last night?" he asked me and my cheeks flushed with heat at the thought of the thing he did with his fingers.

"What does that mean?" I asked him and he frowned even further.

"You wouldn't be asking that if he had," he said dryly.

"Well, he did *something*, I just don't know what it was," I mumbled, looking down.

"If you don't mean to be heard, then don't speak at all."

"Why are you so mean?" The words came out of my mouth just as fast as I could regret them by the look on his face.

"I'm not mean. There's just nothing left to care for anymore."

We were two sides of the same coin. All I wanted was to find something to care for so that I *could* feel something, anything. He seemed to be running away from it. Hiding himself from it.

“Yes there is. There has to be something more.” I refused to believe that there wasn’t something out there, something that called out just to me.

“It doesn’t matter, whatever it is, it’ll hurt you in the end.” He crossed his arms over his chest.

“I care for books. A story can’t hurt you.” I exhaled, feeling like I’d successfully answered a riddle.

He was suddenly right in front of me, grasping my chin between his thumb and his index finger as his gaze burned into mine. “Oh Romina, that’s where you’re wrong. A story *can* hurt you. A good story can wound, maim, and scar. A good story will leave you questioning what you believe to be right or wrong for the sake of pseudo-pleasure fulfilled by some neurons shooting off sparks in your brain. A good story will tear your soul out from your chest and keep you from moving on until you find another that can take its place.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever read anything like that,” I lamented and he tsked.

“Then you haven’t lived.” He dropped my chin at the sound of a knock on the door and walked towards it to open.

“Who the fuck are you?” Sonny asked, pulling the door open wide.

“Felix sent me.” She lifted a bag of clothes high in the air and Sonny tempered his hateful stare. Her eyes widened as she took in the sight of me and she ran over to the couch where I sat. “Is this her?”

I looked over to Sonny, feeling like I needed him to handle whatever was happening before I got it wrong.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, leave the bag and go back to the dorm. I’ll compensate you for your things,” he said in a flat tone, sharpening his stare once again.

“Oh come on, Felix said I could meet her,” she whined and pouted her lip at him.

“Meet, *who*?” He stepped up to her, nostrils flaring as he looked down at her frame that was finally recoiling at his presence.

“Okay, okay, I get it.” She stood up, raising her hands in the air while backing out of the chapel.

Sonny made no attempt to hold in his discontent, slamming the door shut on her face.

“Put some clothes on, I’m late for class.” He crossed his arms over his chest as he tilted his chin towards the bag she’d left on the couch for me.

“I’m going to class with you?” I asked, trying to hide my excitement but failing.

“Why do you sound so happy?” he asked in a monotone way.

“Learning is a privilege,” I responded with a soft smile but he shook his head at me.

“What they do here, it’s not teaching and it’s certainly not learning,” he scoffed and I reached into the bag and pulled out the jade-green uniform.

“Put that on,” he instructed and I lifted off the t-shirt Felix had given to me to sleep in the night before.

I stood there, bare, while I picked up the skirt and stepped inside it, pulling it up to my waist before grabbing the white polo shirt that went with it. I slipped it over my head, fidgeting at the feel of the new fabric against my skin. Sonny stepped behind me, clasping each button closed on the back of my skirt. He was wearing black suit pants with a black button up shirt

and a black vest. I only ever saw the students wearing green and white, but he lived outside the same rules as everyone else.

“You don’t have underwear on,” he pointed out.

“You said it wasn’t underwear,” I reminded him and he cut me a sharp look.

“You can’t go out there without underwear.” He stepped towards me, invading my space so that his chest touched my face with the rise and fall of his breath.

“W-why not?” I asked, his shadow looming over me, reminding me of the danger these heathens truly posed.

“Have you seen the deprived and depraved Catholic little shits running around here? There might as well be monsters out there. If they catch a piece of you, you better believe they’ll think it means you want to give yourself to them, and they won’t ask nicely.” He slid his hand up my leg, pulling it back for just a moment before the sting of his palm against my inner thigh burned on my flesh and spread into a rising heat inside me.

“Do monsters ever ask nicely?” I asked him.

His fingers trailed the inside of my leg, a featherlight touch above the newly welting area.

“I don’t know Pet, I’m not a monster. I’m a son of the Devil. I don’t ask for anything, it’s offered to me freely.” He slipped his hand out from my skirt.

“Who are the monsters then?” I asked him.

“You can make that kind of decision on your own.”

The clothes fit well, and surprisingly her shoes did too. After I finished dressing, Sonny brushed the knots out of my hair, and handed me a granola bar before we walked out of the chapel together towards campus.

“What has Frollo promised you in exchange for, whatever it is he’s asked of you that involves us?”

“He’s promised me nothing. He’s asked nothing of me. He doesn’t care if I live or die,” I said, not hiding my discontent for Father Frollo.

Sonny ushered me into the monstrosity that was the golden cathedral and shepherded me to a door. Once he opened it a large room spilled out in front of me, reminiscent of a Roman-style theater from an old gladiator movie that once played on the public station channel Father Frollo deemed appropriate enough to let me watch a few hours a day. A cascade of rows filled upwards with seats as it rose high up towards an even taller ceiling.

He was there.

The closest thing I’d ever had to a parent.

Staring me down like I had been nothing but an abomination, a stain on his life and his plans. Like somehow this was my fault and not his.

“I told you to get rid of that stray, Santorini. She is not a student, she cannot attend my lectures,” he said with a sneer and Sonny scoffed in response as I grew smaller at his words.

“Keep your eyes off my property, holy man. I’ll only say it once.” He didn’t add the promise of a threat, he didn’t need to.

“Y-YOUR PROPERTY?” he asked in astonishment, not bothering to lower his voice as the room filled with students.

“Found her in my house.” He challenged him with raised eyebrows, “Think I’ll keep her.” The corner of his lip turned up in a smile and he shifted his eyes back at me and tilted his chin towards the steps.

I averted the heat of Father Frollo’s gaze and kept my eyes down, my legs shaking as I stepped up slowly.

“All the way back,” his husky voice whispered in my ear.

He nudged me towards the back of the room, which just so happened to be the highest point as well. He walked past me and sat in a chair, though both seats next to him were occupied. I could feel the heated stares of the other students on me even though I didn't dare to lift my eyes off the ground.

"Sit, Romina," Sonny commanded, but there was nowhere I could sit. Every chair had been taken by someone.

"I don't know where to—"

"On the ground then, kneel, next to me." His cold tone wrapped around each word like a frosty grip, chilling me down to the bone.

"What?" I looked up to find his eyes narrowed in that way that let me know I was crossing the line with him.

He grabbed the ends of my hair and wrapped it around his wrist before pulling down and bringing me to my knees. The students chattering went from a whisper to a loud murmuring chorus of bees droning in my ear. The room was too big and I was small and there were far too many of them everywhere.

"Why are you doing this?" I cried out, the tear falling down the side of my face into my ear from the angle he kept my head at.

"Because if he cares about you at all, he's gonna claim his wrongdoings. Otherwise I'm gonna make sure there's only pieces of you left by the time I'm done with you, and I'll drop them at his door myself." He pulled my hair back tighter, a pained whimper left my mouth.

I heard a few snickers.

Sonny grinned as if he knew a secret.

He softened his hold on my hair and returned to his seat, but the room spun faster. All eyes were on me. My stomach churned and I suddenly felt

nauseous beyond belief.

“I’m going to be sick,” I told Sonny and he frowned.

“Give me your backpack, Rugsley,” he told the student sitting in front of him and he handed it over without a single question, his eyes staying glued onto me.

Sonny crouched in front of me, opening the backpack and as if my body had been waiting for it to appear, my stomach emptied itself inside of it.

“Problem Mr. Santorini?” Father Frollo’s irreverent tone echoed out into the chamber.

“Yes. My pet seems to be sick. Likely her previous owner didn’t take care of her,” he said flatly and a chorus of soft laughter circled through the classroom. “I’ll need to be excused for the day,” he said with an apathetic tone, grabbing my arm and pulling me down the steps behind him.

“I’ll be sure to let your financial council know how well the year is starting off for you,” the headmaster chimed out.

Sonny bared his teeth but didn’t give the headmaster the satisfaction of a response before we left the lecture hall.

I felt my stomach turning in a sick way again. I ran as fast as I could, but I wasn’t able to make it out of the cathedral before I threw up all over the solid gold floor. I stayed there, knelt over with sweat breaking out of my skin for a few minutes before Sonny’s shadow loomed over my pile of puke. I lifted my face to see his hand hanging down to his side, his knuckles torn and bloody.

“Let’s go home, Pet. You can tell me on the walk why the archbishop gets this reaction out of you.” It almost sounded like a threat though none of the words he spoke were menacing.

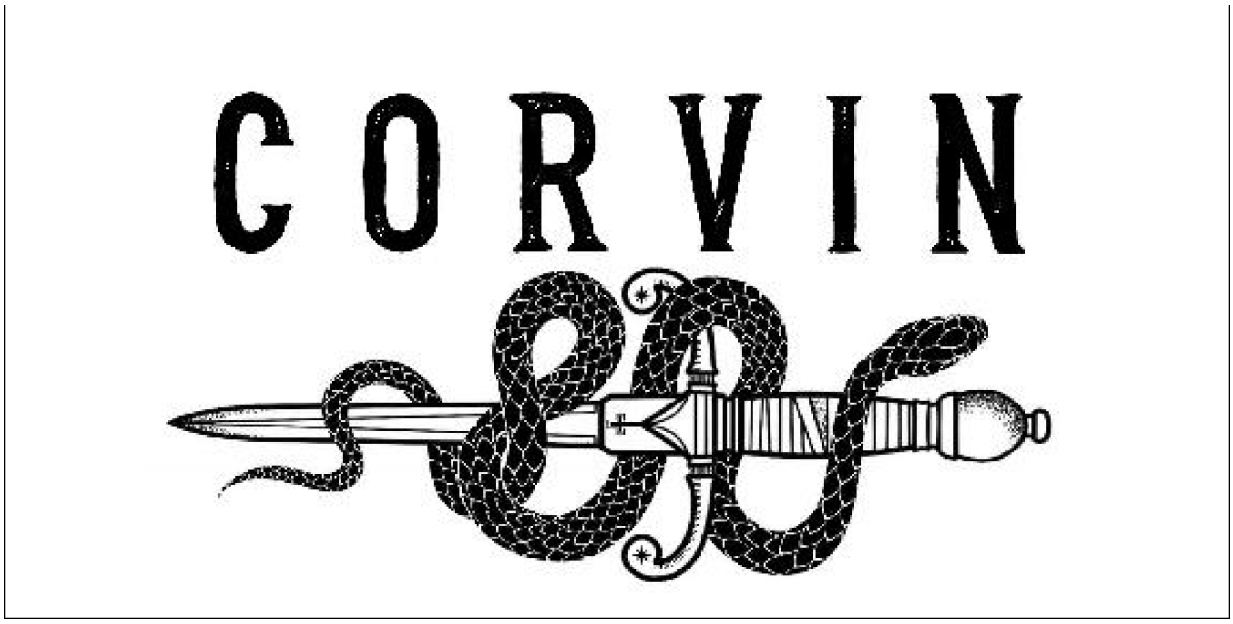
It was just who he was.

Sonny Santorini was terrifying.

Father Frollo wielded a different kind of terror that could take away everything and reduce my life back to nothing but a bell and a secret.

Sonny was the kind that promised freedom.

*OceanofPDF.com*




Son of a bitch.

Not even a week into the school year and I was already out of commission because of a black out. My muscles ached and burned from the aftereffects of the seizure-like state my body went into.

I woke up alone, and that was probably to be expected. I was sure I'd missed my classes for the day already, but if I was lucky Sonny would have put some food away for me in the fridge. Every inch of my body was sore. I stretched my arms over my head and swung my feet out to reach the floor. My spine cracked in twelve different spots while I pushed myself up to stand but stumbled over.

It was like being hungover and then thrown under a meat pulverizer.

I rubbed my temple, feeling a headache starting to drill its way into my brain. First Tylenol, then food. Flashes of silver flew through my vision, and I grabbed on to the wall to keep me steady.

I had already finished my second plate of some quiche Sonny had left wrapped in the fridge when the door to the chapel opened. She looked a little less feral and a little more civilized today, but I still recognized her with that hair from last night, even now, while she hid behind Sonny's giant frame.

"What is she doing back here?" I asked, charging towards him but he stuck his hand out to my chest to keep me from getting closer to either of them.

"Breathe or I'll shove your medicine so far down your throat you won't have a seizure for days."

"Why is she back here?" I asked him, my nostrils flaring as I did my best to keep control of my erratic breathing.

"Romina here was just telling me she was Frollo's ward." Sonny crossed his arms over his chest with a look of disbelief.

She was a tiny thing, and her presence was even smaller. Like someone had stamped out all of the fire inside of her a long time ago and she was just making do with whatever small flickering she could get going that day.

"What the fuck does that mean? Why was she in my room?" I asked, starting to feel my heart pounding louder and louder in my chest.

"We're about to find out, aren't we, Pet?" He turned to her, grabbing her chin between his fingers. "Why were you here Romina? I'm getting tired of asking."

She murmured something quietly though her gaze didn't meet his.

"And I'm supposed to trust that the archbishop's little toy wasn't breaking into our home?" Sonny asked her and her face got real pale and she shrunk back a bit.

Her breathing got shallow and she looked like she was gonna hurl all over the place.

“She keeps doing that,” Sonny added.

“She looks fucking scared,” I told him, stepping slowly towards her.

She looked up at me and when the light hit her just right I could see the purpling shape of my hand decorating her slender neck. She inched backwards until she hit Sonny’s chest and he wrapped his fingers around her shoulders.

“You scared of *him*, Pet?” he asked her and she didn’t hesitate to nod.

Sonny let out a dark chuckle and even I knew the girl must have been deranged to think Sonny Santorini was a safer choice than me. But I didn’t know who the fuck she was or what she was doing here. Sonny was like picking up a glass of poison and drinking it, with him you at least got a choice. The mark around her throat was a reminder that was a luxury she wouldn’t get with me.

“Don’t you have class?” I asked him, trying to push back the anxiety that itched its way up my throat and threatened to break out in the form of another black out.

“She got sick in class, had to take the rest of the day off, at least till Felix gets back,” he said, pushing her into the room and guiding her to the couch.

“Well, I’m awake now. You can go back to class,” I told him and the bastard actually choked out a laugh.

He never fucking laughed, unless it was the psychotic-break type of laugh before a murdering spree.

“No fucking chance.” His expression sobered. “If you lost it again you would probably fucking crush her, have you seen the size of her?”

I crossed my arms over my chest, sitting down on the lone pew behind the couch.

“Whatever.”

Romina.

I kept hearing her cries in the pitch black of my nightmares, always struggling for air under the vice grip of my fist. I didn’t want to be this animal, this senseless beast who could just black out when the bad inconvenienced him.

It was a cop out.

You were supposed to live with your regrets.

To be haunted by your own ferocity.

I got a free pass every time.

And then the weirdest fucking thing happened.

The door opened and Felix walked in. Before he even had a chance to open his mouth or look around, she had pranced to his side and pulled him in for a hug. He gave a smug smirk and smoothed down her hair before returning the embrace.

“Did you have an exciting day, pretty girl?” She shook her head in response, beckoning him closer.

He leaned down and she whispered something into his ear while they both stared daggers straight into Sonny.

“You fucking made her sit on the ground in class?” Felix yelled out, sounding more upset than I would have imagined over this girl.

“There weren’t chairs.” He shrugged and Felix stepped up to him.

“You want to parade her in front of Frollo and dangle your little trophy in front of him? That’s fine, but you’re not going to treat her like shit. You and I both know, even if she was remotely in on whatever the fuck Frollo was

planning, that *none* of it would be within her control. She's a victim, a pawn at best."

He was far too angry, which meant he was already too invested. Too involved. It was the Pisces in him. We were twins but I was pretty sure he sucked up all the astrology personality in the womb. I was just a useless fuck that didn't belong anywhere or relate to anything.

"Are you just a pawn then, Romina?" Sonny stood up, closing in on her quickly.

Felix tried to shield her from him, but he was too quick and held her by both of her arms while he stared into her face. "Tell him what you told me," he growled out.

She shook her head forcing Sonny to rattle her for the truth like a small toy.

"Father F-Frollo raised me," she stuttered out fearfully and then winced while she waited for Felix's reaction.

"What were you doing here, Mina?" Felix asked her in a soft tone.

"I was hungry," she answered, not seeming to mind giving Felix as much of the truth as he asked for.

Sonny frowned his eyebrows.

"Why were you hungry?" I asked and she looked at me for just a second before darting her eyes back over to Felix and Sonny.

Felix nudged her to answer.

"Because Father Frollo hadn't brought me food in a few days," she explained softly.

Sonny rubbed his temples and paced back and forth across the room and voiced his thoughts out loud. "And he's claiming he doesn't know her. Said she's a stray, not a student."

“Why would he lie?” I asked and Felix immediately cut in.

“Why would she?” He was fond of her, it was so like him.

This looked like a trap from every angle if you asked me, but I couldn’t see what the end game was. Why *would* she lie? Father Frollo was a slimy, untrustworthy piece of shit. I didn’t need to ponder all the possible reasons why he’d lie about knowing some girl on his property.

“Did the contractors come back to get the rest of their tools?” Sonny asked and I shrugged in response.

He disappeared from the room and came back a mere minute later holding a power drill in his hand. He switched the attachment on the end for a nut driver, letting me know his patience had grown thin and he was headed for that steel door. He folded his sleeves up with care before attaching the drill to each individual bolt and unscrewing them. After the first few he leaned his shoulder to the door and beckoned me over with a tilt of his chin.

“Hold it up while I get the rest,” he instructed and I nodded, leaning into the door while he got the rest of the pieces loosened.

The door was heavy as hell and sweat dripped down the side of my face while I used most of my strength to hold it up.

“Felix,” I called out and he abandoned the girl’s side to come help.

The three of us struggled but were able to get the door lowered all the way to the floor. The dusty smell of the old attic began to seep into the air of the chapel and Sonny looked back at me with raised eyebrows.

“I’m telling you, whatever’s up here, that’s our ticket out of this shithole.”

I looked over my shoulder back at the girl who probably had no business being here while we uncovered Frollo’s dirty secrets. She was gnawing on

her lip and twisting the fabric of her uniform skirt nervously in her hands, uncaring that she was flashing us what looked like Sonny's boxer briefs under the skirt.

"Are you just gonna let her stay here?" I asked Sonny.

"What's she gonna do?" he asked sharply.

"What if she sneaks off and tells Frollo?"

"She ain't workin' for him," Felix snapped in a hushed tone like he didn't want her listening to what we were saying.

I didn't give a shit if she knew I didn't trust her.

"How can you be so sure? You've known her less than twenty-four hours." I crossed my arms, annoyed that my own brother could be seeing things so differently than me.

"You were asleep. You missed a lot. Mina come here," he called her over and she approached nervously, like a scared little animal.

She was just another sheep in Frollo's little fucked up flock of idiots.

"Romina, what are we going to find up here?" Sonny asked her as if it was some sort of test.

She began to stutter and mumble incoherently, and Sonny exhaled dramatically.

"She sounds like she's glitching out," I laughed.

"She does that when she's trying to lie," he said to me like he was filling me in on some juicy tidbit he and Felix were already in on. "She's horrible at it," he added.

It was like they already knew this girl, and I was somehow behind.

I hated feeling like I was behind.

Missing something.

That was the worst part of these black outs, not knowing what I had done or what may have happened while I was out of it.

“If you’re not going to tell the truth then don’t say anything at all,” Sonny commanded and she stopped her robot-like rambling.

Felix took her under his arm and Sonny led the way up the attic. None of us were prepared for what we would find up there.

“What the fuck?” Felix was the first to break the silence, but only because I didn’t have words yet.

There was an entire living arrangement up here, like someone had been squatting miserably in this hot belltower. The bed was a cheap frame that looked like it had been broken a few times and repaired with less care each attempt. The mattress was old and so thin you could see the lumps from where the springs were breaking.

Springs.

The mattress had fucking springs.

It was something I’d only seen in movies or on old tv shows.

A shabby blanket covered it and there was a little mini fridge next to the bed. A seriously old school television sat on the ground in front of it and I would have bet fifty dollars that if it turned on it would play in black and white.

There was a small oak chest at the end of the bed, and a tiny little desk with a three-legged chair tucked underneath next to a small bookcase. It was crowded with books that didn’t fit inside anymore. On the desk sat a tiny little two burner stove, a pot and a plate next to it.

Someone had been living up here.

It was unimaginably depressing to think about.

“Romina.” Sonny’s voice was filled with a darkness I had not heard in a long time. “Who has been living up here?” he asked her, already seeming to know the answer himself.

“I h-have.” Her voice was clear and though you could tell she was afraid she didn’t seem to bother with trying to hide the truth anymore.

We were too far past that.

Felix clenched his fists till I saw the white in his knuckles and his nostrils flared widely.

“For how long?” He spoke through clenched teeth looking down at her.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“How long did he have you living here?” he gritted out.

“Always,” she said and it sounded like a sharp pin dropping in the water.

Felix turned fast and stormed out of the belltower before taking even another second to examine it. The slamming of his bedroom door echoed loudly enough for us all to hear it even way up here.

“Did I do something wrong? Did I upset him?” she asked Sonny, her voice so sweet and innocent it could only be an act.

“No Pet, you did good. The truth can be a nasty thing to process sometimes.” He caressed her chin between his fingers before stepping further into the belltower.

“Is there anything in here you want?” he asked her and she rushed to the bookshelf and began to pick a pile out before putting it in Sonny’s arms.

She pulled the blanket off her bed to reveal an old school iPad and Sonny furrowed his eyebrows.

“Let me see that,” he said and she handed it to him without question.

He slipped it under his arm, before slipping his hand to her low back. “Romina, go join Felix downstairs.” He nudged her forward and she nodded

before heading down the steps.

“What the fuck?” I asked him.

“You think she’s his daughter?” he asked and I considered the possibility.

“Either that or she’s his secret little sex toy. No one on campus recognized her?” I answered with my own question.

“They think she’s some sort of ghost. But the theories *are* endless,” He said as he walked through the attic examining her things. “If she’s his sex toy, I’ll find out.”

“How could someone live up here for years?” I was mostly just thinking but with Sonny it was easy to think out loud, we almost always had the same train of thought anyway.

“If it’s all you know,” he lamented, running his fingers through the layer of dust that coated all of her things.

There wasn’t much up here. There was a spiral staircase that led to the very top of the bell tower where the bell hung high. But aside from that there was nothing. Sonny looked disappointed, like his ticket out of here had just gone up in flames before his very eyes.

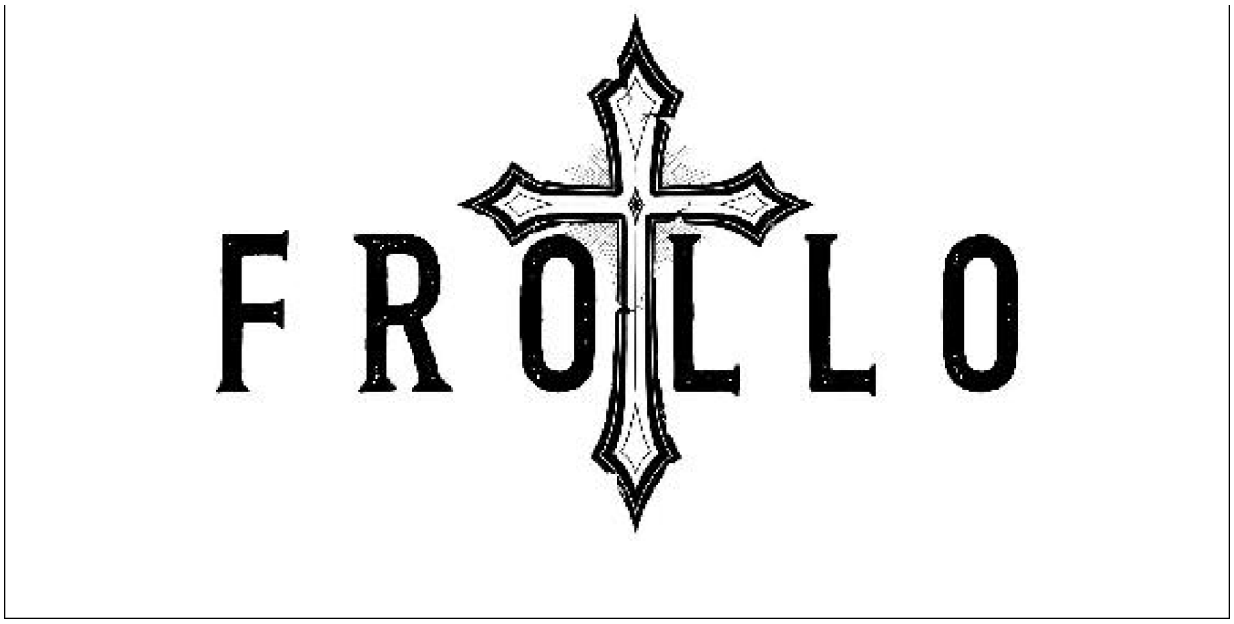
“What’s that smell?” I asked, following the stench towards a dark corner.

Sonny beat me to it, his frame bent over a metal bucket and the closer I got the worse it smelled. He made a retching sound walking away from it with a disgusted and angry look on his face.

“He’s a fucking monster.” I said, backing away from it, yet knowing damn well I was going to be the one dealing with it.

“He’s going to pay for this.” He said through clenched teeth.

OceanofPDF.com




Inconceivable.

I paced the hall outside of my bedroom like a madman, unsure of the last time I felt so out of control.

*Not since her.*

In just a matter of days these heathens had come in here and turned everything that I'd worked to build upside down. Arlan Black thought he'd get one over on me before God sent his soul to hell but he was wrong. I'd be the victor yet.

Despite him sending these debauched heathens to disrupt my plans.

Even if they'd taken away the one thing that was truly mine.

I had hoped that wretched girl would have at least starved to death up in that tower to make things simple for me, but no. They found her before she had a chance to waste away to bones and dust. Parading her in front of me like they knew everything.

They knew nothing.

And the girl was too stupid to talk, too stupid to tell the truth.

I'd made sure of it.

"CLAÜDE," That arrogant Santorini's voice called out from beneath my balcony again.

I pushed through the doors of my room and looked down at him to see him once again draggin the girl by the arm. This time both of the Escura brothers on his side.

"What is the meaning of this Santorini? I have already instructed you to remove this vagabond from my premises." I dismissed him with my hand. "I will call the police if you bring her to me again."

"Good. Call them," he threatened. "I want to show them the rat-hole you've been subjecting this girl to for her entire life." His eyes narrowed and I did my best to mask my surprise.

They'd gotten up there.

They'd seen it all.

I felt the blood drain from my face, but I schooled my expression.

"I don't know what you mean, you certainly can't think I monitor the abandoned properties in this campus enough to be aware of any squatters or hobos," I spat out at him.

"You refuse to claim your transgressions, archbishop?" Felix Escura shouted up to the balcony.

I turned my head to the side.

"We've heard all the rumors around here about your little ghost, your little pet. If you won't claim her, then I'm keeping her for myself, *Headmaster,"* Santorini mocked me. "And when we're done with her, her holes are gonna be so filled up with *heathen* cock you'll be able to see the black in her eyes from this far."

He laughed obnoxiously and I quickly turned back inside my room, fighting the rising stiffness of my own erection. The imagery painted into my mind turning me against myself at the thought of the sinful girl in their hold.

I had sculpted her into the very essence of purity despite the truth of her licentious roots.

And now they would taint her.

I pulled my cock out from my robe and angrily stroked myself, igniting the pleasure that laid dormant over the burden I'd been cursed to bear.

Beatta Maria.

I am a righteous man.

"I *am* a righteous man."

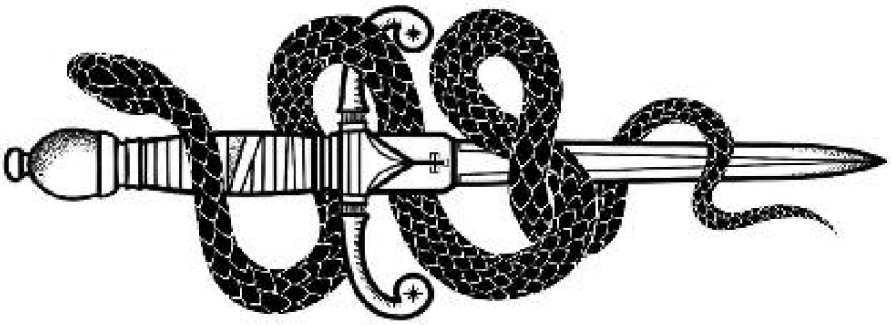
I chanted again and again until thick ropes of cum painted the ground I stood over.

I needed to get rid of the girl, and any trace of her, before they found a way to tie her to me.

That would be the start.

I would right all wrongs. It wasn't my fault God had made the Devil so much stronger than a man.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

I let my anger guide me. Foaming at the mouth and practically blinded by rage when I walked here, but I didn't have the patience to wait for the girl to drag her feet behind me the entire mile back.

I made my point loud and clear.

The crowd of students that had gathered to watch the show parted their circle to let us through and I tossed her over my shoulder and began the trek back to the chapel. She didn't fight, she didn't pound her fists on my back like you'd expect any normal woman to do if a man slung her over his back like I had done. She didn't even so much as yell or curse out a protest.

This was a girl who had all the fight, all the fire, doused out of her before she even really had a chance to find something to fight *for.*

Felix didn't think she had a reason to lie, but I would bet any person threatened with the promise of a lifetime of servitude in a Nile warehouse would promptly fulfill any task bequeathed upon them. She might have been a pawn, but could we be certain she wasn't loyal to him?

“Hey! Is it really true?” The girl who’d come by to bring Romina clothes caught up to Felix, but he waved her off.

“Not now.”

“Let me talk to her,” she begged.

“Not now!” Felix insisted and she finally relented, turning back towards the dormitories.

“Now what?” Corvin asked me, his gaze drifting to Romina who hung like a sack of potatoes down my back.

“Who the fuck knows. Maybe she’s what we were supposed to find up there. Maybe she’s gonna fuck us all to hell,” I told him.

“You’re willing to take the chance that it’s the latter?” he asked, and I stopped walking.

“What am I supposed to do here?” He didn’t answer. “Exactly. Don’t judge a decision that you can’t make for yourself.” I tsked, shaking my head and walking in front of him.

Once we got into the house I kept walking, not letting my feet stop until we reached the bathroom once again. I dropped her to her feet and pointed to the shower.

“Go wash,” I instructed her.

“Again?” she asked, surprised, and scrunched my nose in discontent at the animal that stood in front of me.

“Yes, again. Civilized people bathe daily Romina,” I told her.

“Some,” Felix corrected from behind me, “Not everyone has a stick up their ass.” He laughed out, but I was only horrified by his confession.

“You don’t shower every day?” I turned to face him, not hiding my revolt.

“I mean, not unless I’m disgusting from sweating, or I got my dick wet.” He shrugged and I fought off the sickly feeling that came with the thought of Felix crawling into his own sheets, night after night, dirty and gross.

“You’re thinking about it real hard, aren’t you?” he smirked and I turned my head to look at him.

“You’re fucking with me?!” I asked him, nearly yelling as my eyes bulged out of my skull.

“I don’t know, am I?” He grinned harder and walked away.

I looked back over to see Romina dropping her clothes to the ground, her body so tiny and fragile from the week she’d spent starving, maybe even longer. I couldn’t look away or stop myself from noticing the way her skin stretched over bones. I twitched from the need to reach out and touch. There was a beauty there that was hidden past the tragedies she might have suffered under Frollo’s hands.

“Do you need help?” I asked flatly as she stood under the turned off shower.

“Do I?” she asked, touching the dials awkwardly without turning them on.

I walked over to the shower and turned it on, the cold water beating down hard and fast and she screeched out a howl that forced me to bite my lip to keep my composure.

If there was still any chance it was an act, it was a damn good show.

The water quickly turned warm. She smiled in relief and hurried under the stream, closing her eyes and humming contentedly. I couldn’t look away. I didn’t want to, so I didn’t bother pretending like I had to. She didn’t seem to mind that I was watching, so what was the point?

Then the thought crossed my mind that she didn't mind because she was used to it. Because maybe Frollo watched her too.

The thought made me itch.

A few minutes turned to ten. She had only stood there, under the stream, unmoving.

"Are you going to wash yourself?" I asked and she looked at me with that wondrous look again, I tipped my forehead towards the bar of soap and the loofah that hung on the shower wall.

She took it quickly and lathered it up before scrubbing her body carelessly with it. I shook my head, taking the bar of soap from her and pushing her against the shower wall, disregarding my clothes, soaked from the force of the stream.

"Do you need to be shown how to do everything? Are you pretending or has he really not taught you how to do anything for yourself?" I asked, genuinely wanting the answer to gauge the situation for my own reasons.

"W-what do you mean?" she asked innocently.

I ripped the loofah from her hand and lathered it up twice as much as she had previously, using it to scrub every inch of her body, from top to bottom. I took my time to wash away the traces of Frollo from her skin.

What had he been doing to this girl? And why?

I pulled her under the water again using my hands to rinse the soapy lather off of her. Droplets of water beaded down her breasts, rolling past her nipples and disappearing beneath her. She was a perfect seductress, and she didn't even know it.

Maybe she did.

Maybe that had been his plan all along.

"Your clothes are wet." She stated the obvious like it was a question.

“Would you rather I remove them?” I asked her and her cheeks flushed in a bright red color.

Curious.

Had she been brainwashed by his puritan crusade? Or had he truly spent so little time with this creature that his neglect would now be the downfall of the thing he prized the most?

I unbuttoned my black vest slowly before slipping it off, then moved to the button-down shirt, undoing one at a time before dropping the wet fabric to the ground as well. I slipped my trousers off each leg before throwing them onto the pile of wet clothes I had now formed next to the shower.

I left my boxers on.

Her eyes traveled down, so predictable.

I stepped closer. She stepped back.

My pet didn’t know if she was afraid of me or if she wanted more of me.

Like a baby chick who’d imprinted on a monster.

I stepped again, and we continued our dance until her back was pressed again the cold, tile wall. Her eyes jarred open and her pupils were blown wide. I prowled even closer, blocking the water from hitting her. Steam clouded the room.

“W-what are you doing?” she asked.

I tilted my head to the side, wondering what kind of answer she would prefer.

“What do you want me to do, Romina?” I asked, giving her something of a choice.

“I-I don’t know,” she confessed, looking down.

“Eyes up,” I instructed her, lifting her chin back up with my index finger.

With my other hand I reached between her legs, instead of clenching her thighs she parted them, making room for me. I slipped my finger through her folds, stroking the already slick center of her heat. She might have been innocent, but her body gave her away.

I coated my fingers in her arousal before moving them back and forth over her clit. She gasped loudly and clutched my bicep with one hand. I dropped my hold from her face to lift one of her legs and hitch it over my hip.

“Does that feel good, Pet?” I asked her and she nodded, turning her chin up to the ceiling and closing her eyes. “Uh-uh,” I reminded her, letting my movements come to a stop. “Answer me.”

“Y-yes,” she trembled out, jarring her eyes back open.

She shifted her gaze back down and in the same breath I slipped two fingers barely inside her, eliciting a sound that was more pain than pleasure. I pulled out and thrusted back inside of her, plunging them in as far as they’d go and pushing through the resistance of the thin barrier. She cried in my ear and sunk her nails sharply into my flesh.

“Ahh! That hurts!” she screamed and I chuckled darkly, pulling out to see the crimson staining over my fingers and the river or red running loosely down her legs with the water that cascaded down her flesh.

I raised the blood-soaked fingers to my mouth and closed my lips around them, tasting the sharp metal flavor of her so-called virtue on my tongue. It only raised more questions. Because if he hadn’t been keeping her up there as some sex pet for his amusement, why was she up there at all?

Was Claüde Frollo really that disturbed to let someone live a life like that?

I returned my fingers to her clit, circling my fingers once again to distract her from the pain I'd just caused her. She whimpered against me, and I dipped my fingers inside her again. I used her blood as lubricant and rubbed the inside of her walls, finding her g-spot and curling both fingers against it.

She was tight around my fingers, but her arousal let me move in and out easily, eliciting gasps of pleasure and moans of despair from her.

"No-no-no! Stop!" she cried out, her mouth betraying her body while she tensed and seized as if she was already coming.

She thrashed her head from side to side and I couldn't hide the confusion from breaking through my expression. I pulled my fingers out from her and her eyes came open from the shock of it, as if she hadn't just told me to stop. Like she didn't know what she wanted.

So I made the decision for her.

"You don't tell me no," I gritted out, pressing the side of my forearm to her throat just tight enough to slow her breathing. "Do you understand me?" I said through clenched teeth.

She nodded and my lip twitched out a quick smirk.

"Say it," I commanded her.

"I don't tell you no," she said softly, eyes burning straight into mine as beads of water collected on her eyelashes.

"Good girl." I rubbed my thumb along her jaw before dropping my forehead down to her shoulder, letting my thumb trail down the center of her body slowly.

I felt her breathing hitch in anticipation while I trailed past her belly button, slowing my journey the further south I got.

"*Do* you want me to stop?" I asked her, turning my head to look up at her.

She didn’t answer, she didn’t move.

A false no was easier than the yes she was ashamed of. I saw it too clearly.

I stood in front of the stream of water, blocking it from rinsing any more of the blood down her legs so I could use it. I pinched her clit and rolled it between my fingers, she moaned a heady, dangerous sound that went straight to my cock.

With the arm that still held her leg around my hip I reached from behind and slipped one finger, and then another just a few knuckles deep inside her. I thrusted in and out while the other hand followed a steady tempo, stroking her clit until she came again.

“Oh God!” She turned her head to the side while crying out loudly, echoing her screams through the shower glass and forcing my upper lip to curl up in distaste.

“Do you really want your God watching you right now, Pet?” I hummed in her ears while her walls pulsed around my fingers, her climax shattering her in half as she collapsed into my arms.

I washed her once more, letting the water remove any trace of blood from her skin.

“What did you do? Why am I bleeding?” She breathed out in heavy pants.

“I did you a favor.”

“It hurt.”

“It would have hurt a lot more if someone tried to tell you that what just happened meant anything at all. That it changed you somehow. Out there you’re only as good as what’s between your legs to them, and how *pure* you’ve kept it. I just made you a little less desirable to them. A little *safer*.”

“And to you?” she asked.

“That depends, do you want to be safe or desired? You can’t have both with me.”

She opened her mouth to answer but words didn’t come out. I wrapped her hand over my erection straining through my boxers and her eyes widened. She retracted her arm back to her chest quickly, but her eyes stayed locked on my cock.

I rolled my boxers down my hips, letting my dick spring free. Her eyes somehow doubled in size even though I didn’t think it was possible. Her lips parted when I took my length in my fist, not once bothering to shift her gaze up towards mine.

I stroked methodically, keeping my eyes glued to her face, watching her expression change with every stroke and twitch of my cock. I’d never been so hard in my life. I could have come just from the thought of her watching. It was dangerous, whatever the fuck we were doing, for the sheer reason neither of us knew *what* it was we were doing, but we could see that we did it to each other.

She bit her lip and I fought to quiet my grunts, my hand squeezing over the head each time I came up before going back down. Her thighs clenched together, and she reached a hand between her legs.

“Kneel,” I told her.

She slid down the tile wall until she was on her knees, her face level with my cock making it nearly impossible to not want to shove it in her mouth.

“Close your eyes.” She obeyed and with two more strokes I was coming, ropes of cum landing on her face, her throat, and her breasts.

She blinked her eyes open and stared back at me, my release painted all over her.

“Now what?” she breathed out and I pulled her up from her knees, washing me off of her before I wrapped her in a towel and pushed her out of the bathroom.

I looked down the hallway to see Felix eyeing me, with a know-it-all smirk plastered onto his face, like he’d heard her screams through the chapel.

He didn’t know shit.

“Mina,” he called out to her, his arms spread wide over the back of the sofa casually.

She turned on her heels to face him, still wrapped in the towel and nothing else.

“Come sit with me.” He reached his hand out and she pranced to him.

He winked at me proudly and scooped her up into his lap before nuzzling his nose into her neck. “You smell so good,” he whispered just barely loud enough for me to hear.

I turned back into the shower to wash myself, turning the temperature to a scalding hot. The steam quickly filled the room, and I breathed away the weight that had been searing into me.

That couldn't happen again.

I’d figure this all out soon enough.

I brought my fingers to my mouth, savoring the lingering taste of her blood and cunt still on my skin.

Fuck.

I was the last person who needed this distraction.

Once I got out of the shower I slipped on some sweatpants and a black t-shirt, grabbing an extra one for our guest. Well, if she was here first, I guess

we were the guests. I entered the living room to see her sitting on Felix's lap, her head on his chest and her eyes closed.

"I went through that iPad she had up in that attic," I told Felix and his eyes glanced away from the TV screen to give me his attention.

"And?"

"It's restricted in every way possible. Parental blocks, flags on thousands of keywords, no access to social media, blogs, or anything with any form of news. There were only a few basic learning apps installed but aside from some crossword puzzles and sudoku there was nothing in there," I told him, exhaling heavily.

"I told you she wasn't working for him," Felix said, sounding annoyed. "I don't even like thinking about the fact she could have been up there her whole life. It's so wrong."

"It's Claüde Fucking Frollo," I reminded him.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I had rested my head just for a moment onto Felix's chest while he watched something too colorful and flashy on his giant television. I didn't even mean to fall asleep, but I did. I woke up to the smell of something salty and greasy in the air, my stomach growling loud enough to wake me up from a foggy dream.

"Hungry?" Felix asked still beneath me, and I nodded, looking over to see Sonny at the stove preparing a meal. "Go on." He nudged me.

I cautiously made my way to where the stools were tucked under the black marble counter.

I was no longer in the towel but wearing an oversized black shirt, the breeze between my legs letting me know that was *all* I had been wearing.

I had every right to be unsure around him. He knew it, I knew it. Every experience with Sonny seemed to be borderline terrifying. It was religious, in the way that it always left me afraid of a higher power. Because if God was watching, he'd turned his cheek away with every thrust of his fingers.

And worse yet.

What did it mean that I enjoyed it?

When he asked me if I wanted him to stop, I couldn't answer because I couldn't lie. The archbishop had beaten anything but the truth out of me.

I couldn't tell if Sonny liked hurting me more than I relished the feeling of the pain.

I'd spent so long wondering if I was even alive, if I'd ever be anything more than someone else's secret. I thought for sure that I'd die in that belltower and there would be no one who would know me or recognize my bones, let alone mourn my story.

His lips made that awkward flat line like he could read my thoughts and was trying to hide his amusement from me. He pushed a plate my way and handed me a fork. "Eat," he said, shoving an identical plate towards Felix as well.

I sat down, eventually Corvin rolled into the room as well, saying nothing and barely sparing me a glance before taking a plate from Sonny and sitting down an entire stool away from me. Eventually Sonny made his way around the island and sat on the empty stool next to me and we all quietly made quick work of our individual meals.

"What is this?" I asked him, holding up the little brown wavy stick, loving the way the salty taste and crispy texture rolled over my tongue.

"You've never had bacon before?" Corvin asked, sounding more annoyed at me then surprised.

I looked down and bit into my food again, embarrassed that I'd even spoken up to begin with.

"If Corvin is a dick to you, just kick him between the legs. There's a shut off switch there," Felix told me.

“Really?” I asked, not hiding my surprise.

Felix laughed loudly and Corvin grumbled with obvious irritation.

“Will I get to go to school again tomorrow?” I asked nervously, remembering my failed attempt today with heavy regrets and a need for a do-over.

“No,” Sonny said and my heart sank heavily. “Taking you out in front of those savages was a mistake.

“And tomorrow is Saturday,” Felix said. “No school.” He grinned and I looked down, feeling my stomach churn awkwardly from just the sight of his smile.

“What will you do on the weekend?” I asked, and he brushed my hair out of my face and tucked it behind my ear.

“Make Frollo’s life hell.” He hummed softly into my ear, for some reason the thought alone drew a smile across my face.

“Have you had enough to eat?” Sonny asked and I nodded, before correcting myself.

“Yes,” I answered, remembering how much he needed to hear a physical response.

He narrowed his eyes, like he was unsure if he was pleased or wary of me, but I could see the corner of his lip do a little twitch.

“I didn’t think you were serious when you told Frollo you were keeping the girl,” Corvin said, not caring that I, the girl, was sitting right here.

“Is that going to be a problem?” Felix asked, raising a single eyebrow high up on his forehead.

“I guess we’ll see,” he sneered, peeling his upper lip up in distaste.

“No, you’ll take your fucking meds, and make *sure* it’s not going to be a problem.” Sonny spoke through clenched teeth and the other equally scary

looking heathen grumbled something I couldn’t make out before continuing to shovel his food into his mouth.

He really looked just like Felix, aside from being covered in black geometrical patterns and shapes all over his body. Even his face was stamped in designs.

“Can’t she stay in the dorms?” he asked again after a few minutes of silence.

Both men frowned at his question, and he raised his hands up in the air defensively.

“We need to keep her away from Frollo,” Sonny explained.

“Why?” he questioned again.

“Are you that daft? She’s proof of at least one fucked up thing he’s done around here, if he gets rid of her then he’s in the clear. Maybe this will be enough for Arlan to let us pull the plug on this,” Felix chimed in and his brother scoffed, pushing his empty plate away from him.

“You think anyone that matters is going to take the word of some hobo-girl with no papers to her name over the archbishop?” Corvin asked. “Maybe we need to bring her to Arlan, show him what we’ve already found.”

“Not yet, it’s too soon. I don’t want him taking over what we don’t even know enough about yet,” Felix said.

“You mean, you don’t want him taking your new toy away just yet.” Corvin chuckled.

“Is that my tablet?” I interrupted, pointing to what definitely looked like my iPad on the marble countertop.

“It was,” Sonny said, getting up and brushing it off the edge of the island into the open trash can.

“Hey,” I whined, wondering what I’d done to make him mad enough to do that.

“I’ll get you something else. One that isn’t controlled by what Frollo thinks you should be allowed to see.”

“Really?” I let the smile grow on my face, but quickly pulled it back in, just in case I'd be disappointed by his next words.

“Yes. I don’t have the time to undo the damage he’s caused on my own.” That was all he said before grabbing everyone’s plates and rinsing each one meticulously in the sink before putting them inside a machine.

“Why?” I asked him.

“Hmm,” he said as if he’d been thinking out loud. “Maybe because I might want to mold you to be the very thing your daddy hates, and then I’ll use you to destroy him. Maybe I want to get you so drunk on our cocks that you’ll be begging us to use and abuse you in any way we want because you’ve been craving the attention for so long you’ll take it in any form you can,” he said with a bitter sound to his voice.

“Dude,” Felix whispered, dropping his forehead to his hand and looking away from me. Corvin laughed out a hollow, sinister, sound like he preferred that option best.

“Or maybe I’m just a nice guy, and I want you to be able to think independently from the prison Frollo’s kept you in.” He shrugged his shoulders and continued to clean up after our meal.

If that was true, if their goal was to destroy Father Frollo, then maybe these heathens weren’t the enemy.

Well, maybe they weren’t *my* enemies.

“Come to bed, Pet,” Sonny said, extending his hand out to me, and I recoiled, hitting Felix’s chest with my back.

“It still hurts.” I shook my head, not daring to say the word no.

He smirked.

“What hurts?” Felix asked but I wasn’t sure how to explain the soreness between my legs and something about Corvin just staring hatefully into my soul intensified the moment more than I could handle.

“He made me bleed,” I said looking back at Felix as he drew his eyebrows together in the middle.

“It won’t always do that,” Sonny said to me, tilting his forehead back towards the hallway.

I moved towards him and Felix wrapped his hand around my forearm, tugging me back into his chest.

“You don’t have to go with him if you don’t want to. You can stay with me again,” he said, but before I could answer Sonny had already responded.

“You had her last night. She stays with me tonight.” His voice had that dry, authoritative tone he slipped so easily into, and Felix’s hold on me loosened and eventually dropped so I could make my way towards Sonny.

We walked down the hallway together, stopping at the bathroom once again. He opened a drawer and handed me a toothbrush. “Do you know about brushing teeth?” he asked.

“I’m not an animal, I don’t want bugs in my teeth,” I answered him, trying not to show how offended I was.

“What?” he asked like he had no idea about bugs in your teeth, but I began to scrub inside my mouth instead.

He followed suit, brushing his own teeth as well, glancing over at me as if to see if I indeed did know how to brush my teeth.

“If you don’t brush your teeth,” I started explaining as I rinsed my mouth. “You get bugs in your mouth.”

“I guess that checks out.” He seemed amused and the illusion of a smile graced his face for just a blink.

It didn’t look right.

In his room he pulled back the covers and got into the bed, pulling a book out from a drawer next to his bedside table. I made my way over, trying my best to not draw too much attention to myself.

“Why are you walking so slow?” he asked, not bothering to lift his eyes up from the book.

“I-I don’t know.” I rushed over to the bed and sat next to him.

“You can relax,” he said, as if he noticed I’d been holding my breath this entire time. I let out a sharp exhale.

“Is Claüde Frollo your father?” he asked me and I shook my head before answering him.

“He’s spent my whole life making sure I knew that he *wasn’t*.” He nodded his head as if he was satisfied enough with my answer.

“Is there anything you want to know about me?” he asked, looking up from his book and placing it down on his lap.

Everything.

Anything.

Where would I even start?

I relaxed into the bed, letting my shoulders sink into the pillow and I turned to my side to look at one of the men Father Frollo had described to me as a monster. He was sharp, he was cold, but he hadn’t left me up there to starve to death.

And that begged the question.

Who was *really* the monster?

“What is that?” I asked, fingering the bright reddish and black design inked on the middle of his throat.

He recoiled at first under my touch but relaxed as the pads of my fingers traced the image. It was consuming, so ruinous and magnetizing as it pulled you into its dark void. It somehow reminded me of the heat of infernal fire.

“It’s Sauron’s eye,” he explained like I’d know what that meant.

“What does that mean?” I asked him again.

“It’s… hard to describe. It’s from my favorite bit of literature.”

The thought made me smile. If Sonny enjoyed reading, then we shared common ground on something and that was more than I’d ever had with Father Frollo.

“Well then, I would like to read it too, I think.”

“Yeah?” He raised his eyebrows up, looking me up and down and I nodded.

He opened the drawer once more, putting the book inside it and pulling out another, much, much thicker book instead.

“It starts with the Hobbit,” he said like this was the most important thing he would ever tell me. “And it’s important we start there, because otherwise you won’t understand the events as they unfold. We can go back for the Silmarillion afterwards.”

I nodded like I understood what he was saying, though I truly didn’t have a clue. It seemed to please him, which wasn’t a reaction I was used to receiving. It coming from his mouth felt especially rare so I went along with it.

He read out loud the story with more excitement and inflection than I could ever expect from a man as stoic as Sonny. He went on with detail of the Hobbit man named Bilbo and his underground holes, stopping often to

make sure I understood that these were not just regular holes in the ground but some cozy, well-furnished homes. My eyes started to get heavy when Sonny's voice picked up passion at the introduction of a wizard.

"What's a wizard?" I mumbled, trying to stay awake to hear the ending.

"Someone who does magic," he said.

"What's magic?" I asked again.

"I might need more time to explain that one. Go to sleep," he said, pulling the covers up to my chin.

"I wanted to finish the story," I told him, though my eyes were already closing.

"That wasn't even chapter one." He chuckled. "You can read more of it tomorrow," he promised, just as I let go into the darkness of sleep.

Morning came too quickly, the bright sun exploding through the dozens of colors on the stained glass in Sonny's bedroom windows. It took me a bit to remember where I was, the sudden alarm of realization that I wasn't in the belltower, followed by a secondary rush at the thought that everything would only continue to change now.

There was no going back anymore. I was finally found.

I stretched my body and arched my back, freezing in place at the feeling of a hot body pressed up against me from behind. Or maybe I was the one pressed to his chest. I couldn't tell for sure, but I was definitely taking up a majority of the bed.

I wiggled again, feeling him behind me and suddenly his hand was on my hip, a firm grip holding me in place to keep me from moving.

“Stop that,” Sonny gritted out, reminding me I’d slept in the Devil’s lair.

“Why?” I breathed out, wiggling one more time to get all the morning stiffness out of me.

“Because if you make me hard, then you’re going to have to make it go away too. Understand?” he gritted out, but I didn’t.

“No.” I shook my head.

I heard an exasperated breath behind me.

He pulled my hip back with a jerk until I felt a steel-hard length against my backside, practically poking me in between my buttcheeks. “It means I spent the last thirty minutes willing my morning wood away, and now it needs somewhere to go. Unless you’re prepared to eat my cock for breakfast, settle down, Pet,” he said and I stilled myself in shock while I tried to picture just exactly how that would work.

“Are you a bad girl Romina? Are you imagining what that would be like?” he asked, pulling on my chin with his fingers to turn my head back to look at me.

“Yes,” I answered, giving him exactly what he wanted, unsure if it was out of fear or the fact I enjoyed it every time he praised me for doing what he liked.

It satisfied a piece of me I didn’t know existed, a piece that needed someone’s approval. Someone to say I was doing enough.

He pushed up to his knees, keeping his right hand on my chin as he moved my head from side to side while he examined me from above. His eyes stayed narrowed, like he wasn’t sure what he was looking down at and he needed a closer look.

I didn’t follow the path his free hand took, I didn’t need to. I felt the heat of anticipation begin to pour out from within me and before his touch found me, I was lifting my hips up in demand for contact. His lip curled up with a sinister satisfaction. His face was so beautiful it didn’t matter how damned he might have been, that sharp stare could pierce right through me and turn me into a liquid pile of goo within seconds.

I just hadn’t sorted out what that feeling meant yet.

“It still hurts,” I whined and his hand lowered from my chin to my throat.

“Let me show you that pain and pleasure can coexist,” he murmured into my ear.

I nodded and his fingers were there, plunging deep inside of me again. “Can you feel how wet you are?” he asked me, pulling out to rub his fingers together and playing with the liquid arousal that seeped from me.

His fingers dove inside me again, this time stretching my walls, that dull soreness reminding me of the shower and causing me to clamp my thighs together instinctively. He tightened his grip on my throat, panic began to flutter in my chest, pulling me back to that moment in Corvin’s room just a few nights ago.

I brought my hands up to his forearm, my eyes wide and my heart racing at the memory of his friend with his hand around my neck. I couldn’t breathe but it wasn’t Sonny’s hand around my throat keeping me from air. He continued to rub his fingers in and out of me, slowly but with so much precision that my mind couldn’t focus on the lingering fear with all that pleasure blinding my thoughts.

The bursts of colored light shot through my eyes and it was Sonny’s voice demanding, “Open your eyes” that brought me back, Letting me know I might have gone somewhere else for a bit.

I panted heavily, a bead of sweat ran down the side of my face and Sonny scowled.

“Is it this?” he asked, gripping tighter around my throat. I nodded and he plunged his fingers deeper inside me to show his discontent for my lack of words.

“Yes,” I moaned out an answer and he rubbed the side of my neck with his thumb gently, like a reward.

His other thumb easily found the slickened cluster of nerves between my legs, lightning striking inside of me with just his touch. He circled around it confidently, building a pressure inside of me that demanded to burst out. I bucked my hips with every thrust of his hand, whimpering and whining for release as it got closer and closer within my reach.

He squeezed again, this time cutting off my air so that I could only get small sips in at a time. I raked my nails along his biceps in a frantic movement again.

“I can’t breathe,” I rasped out.

His grip tightened.

“If I wanted you to breathe, I’d let you.”

Just as I felt myself slipping and my head getting lighter, thunder quaked inside of me in surges until I erupted. Sonny loosened his vice grip on my throat just as white dots filled my vision and I gasped for air. Tremors burst throughout my body in the most powerful wave of pleasure I’d ever felt in my life.

“No-No! Stop! No!” The words fell out of my mouth hysterically, though my hips lifted in response for more.

“Stop that,” he roared out. “Do you want this or not?” He thrusted again and I quaked with aftershocks of pleasure.

I nodded, covering my face with shame. His nostrils flared and his lip twitched.

“Then what’s the fucking problem?” He seethed over me, his face too close for comfort with how angry he seemed.

He pulled his fingers out of me and licked them clean in a rather obnoxious way.

“I-I don’t know,” I confessed, fumbling with my fingers nervously. “It’s wrong.”

“Why is it wrong? Because *he* told you so?” He emphasized the ‘he’ letting me know exactly who he was referring to.

“It’s sinful,” I told him.

“That’s a made-up word,” he said, attempting to shatter my version of the truth. “Frollo decides how he wants the people out there to behave because it’s what he’s been brainwashed to believe by the ones who came before him. He thinks his version of Heaven is the version *we* all want. Let me strike the first match to burn his version of the world for you, Pet. Because your *Father* sure as shit doesn’t abide by the rules he himself has imposed on us all.” His emotions rising the more we spoke of Father Frollo.

“I-I don’t understand,” I said, unsure of how I was supposed to feel about this revelation.

“It’s all lies,” he said, getting off of me shoving his hands in his underwear to adjust himself. “If his Heaven is real, I’d rather burn.”

My eyes trailed down, unable to avoid staring at the large bulge in his pants.

“Frollo jacks himself off with the same hand he dishes out communion. He’s not holy and he’s sure as hell not above any of us. You included, Pet,” he said, lifting my chin up to look at him.

“But, he’s God’s messenger,” I said, the confusion still clearly painted on my face.

“Ha!” he cackled out. “God is dead darling. This has long been Satan’s playground.” He slipped on a black shirt and began to button it up before slowly folding the sleeves up with care around his forearms.

What he called the Sauron’s eye that was painted onto his throat made his jawline look even sharper than it already was. That, combined with the way he buttoned his shirt all the way up to the collar was doing something to me that I couldn’t understand or put into words. I breathed out noisily and he arched his eyebrow, raising the word ‘Son of Satan’ with it.

“You believe in the Devil?” I asked him and he smiled enough to show teeth.

It was an odd thing to see on his face and it made the hairs on my arms stand.

I’m not sure I enjoyed it.

“It wouldn’t matter. You think Satan cares whether or not you believe in him? He’d rather you believe in yourself.”

“Why?” I asked again, trying to define something I couldn’t put in words.

“Because if you believe in yourself, you’d never believe in God.” He started, “I don’t believe in good or evil. I believe in chaos. I believe in disorder and letting it run wild within your soul. I believe surrendering to the worst parts inside of us is the only way one can truly know themselves. I believe that forcing people into a corrupt belief system that only serves to empower the rich and oppress those who most need help is the only form of evil I’ve ever truly witnessed.” For someone who presented as so dispassionate it seemed I’d finally figured out what Sonny cared about most.

“You see God as the villain?” I asked him.

“I can’t make it any more clear. God is an illusion,” he said flatly.

“Then what does that make the Devil?” I asked again, trying to figure out how the pieces all fit together.

“A pawn, used to control the weak minded. Something to scare them into submission,” he clarified.

“So you don’t believe in some horned abomination who will claim your soul?” Everything that I thought I knew was crashing down with the deluge of his words. I needed to hold onto something concrete before I began to spiral down an uncertain trajectory.

“Oh my sweet little pet, make no mistake, I *am* that abomination,” he said, reaching out to caress my face. “And it is *your* soul I will devour.” His thumb brushed down on my lip, roughly dragging it down before pulling his hand back.

*OceanofPDF.com*

It was damn near ten in the morning, and they still hadn't left Sonny's bedroom. I was starting to get impatient and considering the idea of just barging in there and telling him his time with her was up.

Were we taking turns?

There was an unrelenting pounding out front, and I rolled my eyes at the flash of sandy blonde hair that floated opposite the window next to the door. She was one of those that was going to be hard to get rid of, I could already tell. She had the stars in her eyes for us, and not in the same way that most chicks did.

This one thought we were *alike*, that we could be *friends*. We probably could have been, if I had been looking for any. But the truth was the three of us had been a triangle we'd sewn shut a long time ago. We didn't make room for anyone to pry their way in and kick over what we'd spent our entire lives building.

Or hell, maybe I was misreading the whole thing and she was just using us to find out more about our belltower ghost she seemed so damn interested in.

“I can literally see you,” she shouted through the window and I rolled my eyes with a groan before getting up from the couch to open the door.

“Sonny doesn’t like surprises,” I told her, letting her know her visit would be unwelcome.

“You said not now, that was yesterday. It’s most definitely not now, *now*.” Well shit, she wasn’t wrong.

“Fine, come in.” I waved her inside and she practically jumped on top of me with excitement, leaping onto my back as she took in the chapel with a marveled look in her eyes.

“You guys redid this place in a week?” she asked, the disbelief in her voice echoing out through the high ceilings.

“We paid someone to do it. You saw what it used to look like?” I asked her.

“We broke in a few times and got drunk out here last year, but the smell of the rats wasn’t worth the possibility of getting kicked out and sent to the poorhouses.”

I dropped her on her feet before sitting back down on the couch, propping my arms up on the backs of the cushions and lifting my feet to rest over the coffee table. Reesa looked like a kid in a candy store, unsure which part of the house she wanted to inspect first. Then she whipped her head back towards me and her eyes went wide.

“Where is she?” She steered back on track to her original mission, the alert in her eyes letting me know all her focus was directed back on our latest addition.

“She hasn’t come out of Sonny’s room yet. Good luck getting him to share.” I chuckled and she frowned.

“Is she Frollo’s daughter then?” she asked me and I shrugged, not feeling right telling a story that wasn’t mine.

“Was she really in the belltower? Was she living up there?” She began firing off the questions before I could answer, and not that I had the answers to give to begin with.

“I know almost as much as you do. We’re still trying to discern the truth from the lies.”

“Has she been up there this whole time? I mean, the legend is as old as I am,” she said in a hushed voice.

“I think there’s a good chance of that. I think she’s even tried telling us that. It’s just hard to believe that any monster out there could do something like that to anyone,” I told her with a heavy sigh.

“I always got tales from the crypt vibes from him man. You think he’s been doing something pervy with her?”

“Doesn’t seem like it. But we haven’t gotten the full story from her yet.”

“My parents thought good old ole’ Claüde Frollo would get my life back on track, because nothing else could.” She snorted a laugh. “Can you imagine If they knew he’s been keeping a sex slave in his attic? They wouldn’t believe it even if they saw it with their own eyes,” she said with a smirk.

“Your folks are really religious?” I asked her.

“Big time. This…” she points to her short hair and then fans out to the uniform, “was their idea. Not sure if it was to get me out of their space or actually for my benefit.” She didn’t bother to hide her contempt for her parents, and I could easily see why.

“They thought cutting your hair would keep you safe here?”

“Yeah, they still don’t realize it’s the combination of carrying a taser, mace, and a sharp key fob between my knuckles.”

Folks like hers were the worst kind. The ones who blindly followed Frollo and his crusade because they believed in some old concept of what religion was supposed to be. *Faith*, they called it. There was nothing to have faith in anymore, and there was no one listening to their prayers.

The only magic that existed was the kind you created on your own.

The universe always answered yes, you just had to make sure you asked the right questions.

Until people truly understood the weight of that, they would stay trapped in their own self-created prison. Unable to grant themselves the simplest form of manifestation.

“Ughhhh!” She dropped into the couch heavily, “What are they doing in there? It’s practically lunch time already,” she complained, shuffling her legs anxiously before getting back up to stand.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” I warned her with a chuckle when she started walking towards the hallway.

She didn’t get a chance to do whatever she thought she was going to do. Before she could even position herself directly in front of Sonny’s bedroom door, he was stepping out of it with Romina in tow. Whatever she must have been preparing to say must have dropped right out of her head instead of the mouth she left gaped open.

Sonny had that effect on people.

Maybe it was because of how good looking the dude was, and maybe it was because he exuded a vibe that seemed like hell incarnate in the shape of

a person. Either way, she lost her composure and backed up into a wall to let Sonny by.

He didn't even spare her a glance. I didn't miss the way Romina's hand clutched his forearm tightly while she tip-toed behind him wearing nothing but an oversized shirt and knee-high socks. She smiled brightly once her eyes landed on me and she let go of Sonny and bounded over, jumping onto my lap and wrapping her arms around the back of my neck.

"Did you sleep well, Mina?" I asked her, placing a gentle kiss on her cheek that had her quickly turning an adorable shade of red.

She nodded perkily.

"Mina?" Reesa choked out in surprise.

Both Romina and Sonny whipped their heads back instantly to see who had said her name and Sonny's face twisted in startled disbelief.

"Do we need to fix our security system? Apparently breaking into this chapel is something *anyone* is capable of," he said in annoyance.

"I'm Teresa. We haven't formally met. Though not for lack of me trying," she said, leaving her hand out for him to shake.

Sonny enjoyed being feared, but secretly he enjoyed the people who could stand their own against him. He took her hand in his grasp before giving her what she wanted.

"Sonny," he told her.

"I fucking know," she said and he frowned. "I'm here to meet the ghost." She hopped over to me with excitement and stood in front of Romina before lowering down to her knees.

"Hey there," she said cautiously as if she'd been trying to approach a scared animal.

"Don't talk to her like that." Sonny corrected her.

“Sorry, I just …didn’t know what to expect,” she explained to Sonny before looking back over at Romina. “I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Y-You have?” Romina answered meekly, like she wasn’t ready to share her equally curious personality with the girl in front of her.

“Everyone talks about you. We just didn’t realize you were real. A lot of people around here thought you were just a ghost when they’d see you up there. I would have broken you out a lot sooner if I knew you were locked up there.” She seemed disappointed in herself, like the strings of her morals were tugging tightly at her from this whole thing.

Romina didn’t respond.

“Those are my clothes you’re wearing,” Reesa chirped, Romina didn’t say anything.

“You should say thank you,” I mumbled in her ear.

“Thank you,” she said, unsure of herself.

“I think Reesa wants to be your friend.” I reassured her, sensing how nervous she was with the addition of a new person in her already unstable life.

Reesa nodded so hard I could practically hear her brain rattling in her skull.

“What do friends do?” she asked me and Sonny scratched his head.

“Well, we’re kind of like friends, aren’t we?” I asked her and she took a second to think about that before agreeing and being content with it as a response.

“Can I take her out?” Reesa asked me and once again I shrugged a response.

“I’m not her fucking—” I tried to tell her but before I had even finished, Sonny had already cut in.

“No,” he said dryly, still standing over the couch with his arms crossed.

“Why not?” Reesa asked him, not so much as a challenge but a genuine question.

“Because I don’t trust her, I don’t know you, and worst of all, I have no faith that this isn’t some deeper ploy that Frollo is attempting to mastermind.” His lip was twitching at the mention of the Archbishop.

“You really got your panties in a bunch for him, dontcha scary guy?” She chuckled as she reached out and ruffled his hair, causing his eyes to widen with a furious type of rage.

He stormed off without a word and it was quite clear he’d gone to fix his hair in private, where he could process Reesa’s abrasive personality.

“You again?” Corvin’s voice echoed out from the hallway into the high ceilings of the chapel.

“Reesa,” she said without as much cheery inflection in her voice, reminding him of her name.

Shit, maybe I did like her.

“You’re really not going to let this chick, who you have zero control over, have her first day of normal girl life and make a friend?”

“I didn’t say shit, take it up with Santorini.” I reminded her who we were talking about in case she’d forgotten who was really in charge.

“If you keep her in here, keep her ignorant, keep her *controlled*, then how are you any different from him?” she asked me, both eyebrows raised up high as she waited for an answer.

“That’s not my intention.” Sonny’s deep voice took the room by surprise with his reappearance, his hair styled back to perfection once again. “But you have to understand there are a lot of risks at play here, things I’m not

willing to jeopardize for ‘a day of normal girl life.’ Whatever the fuck that means.”

“How much damage do you think I can really do in a couple of hours?” she asked with a laugh.

“Just a couple of hours?” he asked her, and she nodded with a smile, like she knew she was getting her way.

“Do you want to go with Reesa?” I murmured into her ear.

“Where?”

“I was thinking I’d drive us over to the court of miracles, get some drinks,” she said, looking over in Sonny’s direction since she knew it was his approval she needed.

“No drinks. Get her some of her own clothes.” Sonny laid out the rules, tossing Reesa a fat stack of cash that had her eyes going wide. “And you have to take Corvin.”

“What?”

“What?”

“What?”

All three of them asked in protest, Romina taking me by surprise with her decision to be vocal about this, of all things.

“I told you, I don’t know you,” he said to Reesa. “I don’t trust you, and I don’t know that all of this isn’t part of Frollo’s plot. It’s Corvin or nothing.” He shrugged his shoulders as he waited for the girls to decide.

“Felix can’t come instead?” Romina asked sweetly and I could see the scowl on Corvin’s face carving just a bit deeper.

“I’ve got soccer practice soon. I’ll be there for a few hours.” I dropped my hand to the top of her head.

I had found myself unhappy with my decision to commit to the sport. I had originally signed up out of fear of being bored and now saw that with Romina here there wasn't a single minute of stagnant energy I'd experienced yet.

She looked over at Sonny silently, as if she was waiting for a reason why he couldn't come instead of Corvin as well.

"I have business to deal with today. I'm heading into town," he explained to her before looking over at me. "*He* wants to meet. Not sure if I'm ready to tell him about our pet." He kept Arlan's name coded in front of our new guest.

"Don't call her that," Reesa said, slightly outraged at his nickname for her.

"I've got better shit to do." Corvin protested and Sonny gave him an *I don't give a fuck* look that was perfect for all ages.

"Take your meds," Sonny said before turning around to walk off, but Romina reached and grabbed his hand before he could get too far.

Sonny turned to face her and with his free hand he caressed the side of her cheek before she let go and he walked off. Though there were no words spoken, the display of closeness was far too intimate for someone like Sonny. Someone who grew up without the slightest bit of tenderness or familial endearment.

Corvin grumbled something incoherent before storming off into his bedroom. He thought needing medicine somehow made him look weak.

He was fucking stupid.

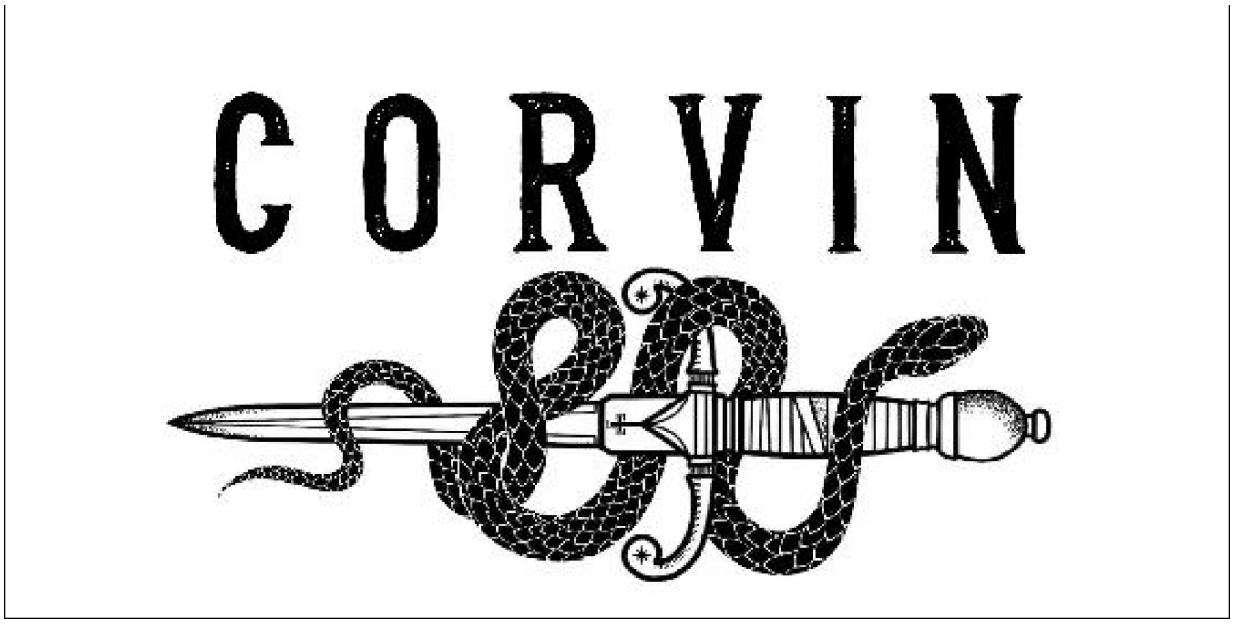
What made him weak was his inability to wrap his head around the fact that it was okay to need certain things to get by. I did have to wonder how much longer it would have taken for us to find Romina, had he not choked

her out in his bedroom the other night. Would she have starved to death up there before we'd gotten to her? Would Frollo have somehow gotten to her first?

Either way, it was too late for what-ifs now. I needed to figure out how this girl played into Frollo's plans, and I needed to figure out how to heal what he'd broken inside of her.

Because when I looked into her eyes, it broke me, too.

*OceanofPDF.com*




“Remember what I told you?” I came out of my room to hear Felix asking her, her face held in his hands. “Just kick him between the legs if he does something you don’t like.” She nodded with a doe-eyed look to her that was so innocent it had to be fake.

I grumbled to myself and crossed my arms while I waited for the two girls I didn’t know at all, to dictate how my day was going to go. This kind of shit always happened when I blacked out. I missed so much information and it seemed like no one ever gave a fuck enough to explain to me what the hell was going on.

I would have preferred to walk towards campus parking in silence, and at least it seemed like Romina and I had that in common. Reesa was a chatty one, talking about anything and everything that would fire out of her mouth-hole at rapid speed before it had a chance to get filtered through her brain.

“Do you think you’ll be going to class with the rest of us now? Are you going to move into the dorms?” Reesa went off a million miles an hour, far too excited, and Romina looked to me for some sort of approval before she answered. I just shook my head and shrugged. She could answer for herself. Or had she never had the option before?

“I-I don’t know,” she responded when I didn’t bother to give her any information.

She didn’t need to know that I was more out of the loop than she was.

And now Sonny was meeting with Arlan without us, not that he needed to include us in these meetings. We all knew Sonny would lead the shrine without us. But things were shifting now, earlier than expected.

Everything was already changing and the only reason seemed to be Frollo’s little sheep standing right next to me. I whipped my head back at Reesa and peeled my upper lip up in a silent warning for her to stop her incessant babbling, but she was too dense for nonverbal cues. She rolled her eyes at me and continued on.

“Well, I bet if we contacted the CGS we could draw up paperwork,” she said, eyes blown wide as she marveled at her own idea.

“CGS?” Romina asked, unsure if she was repeating the right letters.

“Children of God Services. They deal with fosters, adopted kids, anyone misplaced and such. You’re an adult, but technically you have no paperwork so maybe they could help.” She shrugged and I tsked out loud at her stupidity. “What?” she asked me with a whine to her voice.

“You’re an idiot if you think that’s how it works. The minute they see her they’ll get dollar signs in their eyes and draw up a contract with the nearest Nile warehouse to get her ‘off the streets and into production’.” I used the air quotes exaggeratedly.

That was their motto for the homeless, indebted, or displaced and they advertised it proudly. To boot, they had claimed to have cleaned up the country's 'immigrant problem' and turned them into hard working, productive civil servants. The real truth was that they were all shoved into poorhouses for the few hours a day they slept between shifts in the warehouses.

A cot and a hot, but worse than prison.

Those that were rounded up into the Nile's homeless programs were forced to work thirteen to fifteen hour days in exchange for their living arrangements and they were paid a fraction of what those who arrived there by other means were given. If you'd signed up on your own, you got a *few* luxuries.

If that's what you called getting paid enough to eat.

They exploited those with mental illnesses and addictions by selling their medications, drinks, and drugs at an unreasonable price that would leave them unable to purchase any other necessities for the month. Keeping them in that unending poverty cycle, constantly crushed by the wheel of demand as it spun on top of them. They called it inflation, but when did eating become a luxury?

Frollo's God preferred profits over saving a sinner's soul.

The church preyed on everyone. Holding their future hostage and limiting their options. Unless you'd spent four years in one of the dozens of parochial schools set up throughout the country, then you were shipped off to one of the Nile's poorhouses for exploited labor.

The Nile became the ruling conglomerate soon after the virus hit. Buying out every major monopoly and delivering whatever was necessary to keep

people in their homes, quarantined away from the infected for as long as possible. Now twenty years later, everything came from them.

The poorhouses were converted from old prisons and warehouses to become housing quarters and distribution centers for The Nile. Every person aged fourteen and up was given a bed in a shared space, three meals a day, and an electronic card with credits they could earn by working extra hours at the warehouses or distributions to purchase other living necessities.

If they were lucky enough to become breeders, The Nile granted them a 500 square foot dormitory to start their family. I would bet Reesa here probably grew up sharing a studio apartment with her parents. They were likely ecstatic to send her off to NotreDame and get some space back to themselves while they worked to death.

The system had long been rigged to keep the poor working for the wants of the rich, barely getting by with enough to cover their own needs.

If the people realized the power was all theirs, they would have rioted and gotten back everything that was owed to them. But here they were wasting seventy-hour weeks in warehouses just to cover the cost of a week's worth of insulin with a month’s pay. Some people were born in debt, and they didn’t even realize it.

They were so blind, too pushed against each other by the church to believe that those who had just a crumble more than them, would try to take what was theirs. Instead of rallying together the people fought to prevent equity, because the idea alone made them fear that they would lose everything. Charity didn’t even exist anymore. There was no one to give to. The church and the Nile worked hand in hand. Orphanages became their properties, raising the children until working age, and giving them the option to go to warehouses or join the clergy.

A trap.

Sonny wanted out of here, wanted us to go to college in Oxford and let the church ruin this ass stain of a country until it rotted away completely and there was nothing left to salvage. Arlan Black was too old to make plans, and his descendants were gone, leaving a hole in the future.

It almost felt like a test.

Sadistic old bastard.

I had enough to deal with and it was bad enough having Sonny hounding me day and night about my episodes. I lied to my doctors and my psychiatrist. They wouldn't have let me come here if I had told them the truth about me blacking out again.

I couldn't leave Felix to fend for himself. The reality was, the three of us were so entwined in each other's bullshit I couldn't remember a time where we'd been apart longer than a week.

*Except for when he threw me in that psych ward for a study.*

It had always been the three of us.

So, I lied to them, told them it was getting better. Told Sonny it wasn't getting worse.

I wasn't going to get left behind. That was for fucking sure. I couldn't live without those assholes.

*Not an exaggeration.*

"Is this your first year?" I asked her.

"I'm actually a senior. I'll be heading to dental school next fall if I can convince the church that I'm dedicated to God," she said, mocking a blowjob gesture.

At graduation she'd have to prove her case to a board. Half would be clergymen from the church, the other half were rich millionaires who

funded the graduate programs for these types of professionals.

It was nearly impossible to be selected if you weren't already born into a formally educated family. The wheel kept spinning, and the poor lived under the desperate delusion that they could break free from it.

It was futile. They always ended up abused by the system instead.

Reesa went on asking pointless questions and I drowned out her voice until it became nothing but incoherent warbling in the back of my mind. Romina answered with a quiet yes or no whenever she deemed appropriate but she continued her meek act and stared down as she walked. I looked back and eyed the two of them, an air of discomfort between them that the blonde girl seemed to be unphased by, while she prodded and poked in an attempt to reveal private and intimate details about the girl's life and history.

"So just up there all alone for eighteen years?" she asked with amazement and Romina nodded silently.

I grabbed Romina by the wrist and pulled her to walk in front of me, pressing my hand to her back and urging her to walk faster.

"Are you sure you need to come?" I asked Reesa, not bothering to hide my contempt for her personality type.

"Um, this whole thing was my idea," she said and rushed to follow when we picked up our pace in front of her.

"That doesn't mean you need to come," I said dryly and Romina laughed before my eyes drifted over to her.

She cut her laughter short, and I narrowed my eyes her way.

I wasn't the one she should be afraid of.

She stared too long at my face, and I knew she was eyeing the ink above my eyebrow.

Memento Mori.

Remember to die, remember death, remember we all die. Two words that kept humanity in a false imprisonment. They didn't realize death was a gift. The end to all their torment and suffering.

Every asshole on campus had a car in this parking lot and mine was hidden somewhere in the clusterfuck. I hit the button on my key fob to sound out the alarm on the car and Romina jumped backwards hitting my chest.

"Jumpy little lamb, aren't you?" I asked, my lip curling into a half smile and her eyes widened before she nervously nodded at me. "Get in," I instructed her, gesturing over to the car before I hit the unlock button.

She stood in front of the door like she wasn't sure what to do with it. I really wanted to applaud the whole commitment to this 'Frollo's captive' role she was trying to sell, but it was too forced to stick. I rolled my eyes and grabbed the door handle, making a dramatic show of how easy it was to open the door while she looked inside nervously.

"Get in," I repeated.

She hesitated, but Reesa climbed through the backdoor so eagerly that she had no choice but to follow suit into the passenger seat. I shut the door before making my way over to the driver side and the exhaling my annoyance at the dumb look on her face while she stared out the front. I leaned into her, taking in an intoxicating scent of vanilla and honey from her hair before pulling the seat belt over her chest and clipping her in.

She let out a squeak.

I chuckled and started the engine.

I pulled out fast and kept the car in reverse, doing one of the things I enjoyed most. I sped through the parking lot, dodging and swerving around

any obstacles or cars that appeared in my way before shifting the gears and driving out onto the main road. Reesa screeched out like a banshee the entire time but when I looked over, Romina's face had a smile carved widely over her cheeks. Her hands clutched her seat tightly, but her enjoyment was too evident to be denied.

I pulled the e-brake, letting the car spin twice before righting it to the direction we needed to go.

"Where to, then?" I asked, turning back to look at Reesa, sprawled over the backseat, dread and panic written all over her features.

"T-the Court of Miracles, asshole," she yelled out, kicking the back of my seat.

"What the fuck do you know about the Court of Miracles?" I asked, looking at her through my rearview mirror.

"It's a shopping mall." She crossed her arms and frowned at me.

"Good," I told her, speeding through the streets.

The first store that Reesa took us to had mostly mustard yellow clothes floating around the mannequins.

"No," I told her before she tried to force us to walk in, placing my hand over Romina's chest to keep her from entering.

"What do you mean?" Reesa asked.

"She's not wearing that shit." It looked like the kind of clothes you'd see on a sad PTA mom who got railed twice a year by a husband that could

barely get semi-hard.

“Oh, because you have better fashion sense?” she asked as if she wasn’t wearing black and yellow checkerboard pants that clashed terribly with her green t-shirt.

This girl was a fucking wreck.

I sucked something imaginary from my teeth as I thought about my options here. I didn’t actually give a shit what the girl wore, but if I let this buffoon dress her, then there was a good chance I was gonna have to suffer Sonny’s wrath *and* be forced into a do-over.

Whatever that fucking saying was about getting a job done well the first time, we could apply it here.

“Do you want to see the *real* Court of Miracles?” I asked Reesa and her eyes went wide with her nod.

“I fucking *kneeew* it,” she exclaimed happily like all her possible conspiracy theories were about to be revealed in front of her very eyes.

“It goes without saying, that if you repeat anything you’re about to see, that I’ll fucking rip your eyeballs out myself before I stuff them down your throat, yeah?” I asked her, nostrils flaring as I proposed her options to her.

“I guess it's a good thing you said it then.” She laughed nervously and hooked Romina’s arm into hers.

I grabbed Romina’s hand and pulled both of them across the street, through the small shopping square they called The Court of Miracles. It was just a distraction, a way to hide what was really there, if you knew where to look.

The black door in the narrow gray building was smashed in between a bookstore and a bakery. It was hardly noticeable, so much that it was the

bookstore she took note of instead. I didn't miss the way Romina looked inside the glass window to stare at the books longingly.

I opened the door knowing any passerby would think it was an entrance to an upstairs apartment for the retailers who had businesses on the ground level. There were maybe six or seven of them in total. They paid heavy taxes to the Church to be able to run their businesses without the meddling of the Nile. It was mostly Mom and Pop shops with workers who still held a dream of owning something real for themselves.

Poor suckers didn't know that just a few feet below them was an entire ecosystem of people calling the shots themselves. People who didn't abide by Frollo's laws and refused to put their heads down and let a conglomerate and a made-up God decide their fate.

It was the illegal market to end markets.

Reesa tried to walk ahead but I stuck my arm in front of her in warning.

"You don't come back here without me. Not unless you have a death wish. You understand?"

She nodded fearfully.

We walked through the narrow hallway until it got so dark that you couldn't see in front of your hands. It came to a dead end, and I heard Romina squeal when her chest hit my back from behind. Soon followed the 'Oof' of Reesa doing the same.

The walls narrowed too tightly at the end of the corridor, I reached into my pocket to grab my phone for a light, always forgetting that crucial step *before* going deep into the hallway. It didn't help much, but I could at least find the painting hanging on the wall without having to feel around for it. I pushed it to the side, feeling the cool breeze seeping in from the hole hidden in the wall.

“In you go,” I whispered to Romina, guiding her by the elbow into the tunnel carved inside the wall.

I wanted to leave the spare, still not fully sure I understood the purpose of her being here. Not such luck. As I followed Frollo’s sheep into the tunnel, Reesa’s death grip on my bicep nearly punctured a hole in my skin.

“Let go,” I hissed out.

“I can’t see!”

“Then turn back around and go wait in the car if you’re scared. I’m not here to hold your hand.” Romina instantly let her grip on my forearm go with the words that were meant for the abrasive blonde.

I reached out to grab her wrist before she disappeared into the dark, knowing full well there were plenty of deviations and secret passageways in this underground cavern that could cause someone to lose themselves for days. And days down here undiscovered could cost you your life.

She gasped into the oblivion as my hand wrapped around her bony flesh, taking her by surprise.

“Not you, little lamb. Don’t want you getting lost down here,” I said, my face was close to hers but there was so little light in the tunnel, I still couldn’t make out her expression.

I didn’t need to. I could feel her pulse thundering in my grip.

I led her down the flight of stairs that appeared without warning and we made our descent underground. Reesa clutched the back of my shirt into a bundle in her hand and annoyingly followed behind until we reached the steel door that opened out to the *real* Court of Miracles.

There were multiple entrances, but this one was the most accessible from where we were.

Neither of them could hide the starstruck look on their faces when I opened that door into the underground majesty of the court. A brilliant array of colorful lights hung above on the ceiling, draping the entirety of the canals in pseudo-starlight. Tents and pavilions were erected all throughout the concrete caverns with folks who not only sold their own handmade wares, but they could get nearly anything you wanted while bypassing The Nile's distribution centers or using their own stock.

For them it was the principal, the ability to have control over what they were consuming. To not fold under the pressure of capitalism and the vice-grip that religion held it under, entwining one deeper into the other until you couldn't separate them.

"Can I look around?" Reesa asked, her eyes getting bigger and bigger by the second.

"I won't be responsible for you if you get lost, meet back here in an hour or I *will* leave without you," I warned.

She went to grab Romina's hand, but I swatted her away.

"She stays with me." I wasn't going to deal with the blowback of losing her.

She pouted but eventually resigned and pranced off to the nearest tattoo barrack. I herded Romina into Dera's boutique.

"Corvy," she cooed out and I immediately regretted my decision, but found myself too late to turn back.

Dera was decent enough. She'd made her way out here and set up a name for herself in the Court. She flipped her brown hair behind her shoulders and walked towards us. There was no way she was even seventeen, but the girl had hustle and you couldn't deny her that.

"Dera," I said flatly, pulling Romina in front of me almost like a shield.

“Who’s this?” she said, her voice pitching high up with surprise once her eyes had a chance to adjust to Romina’s unique appearance.

Unique didn’t really do it justice. I’d never seen anyone who looked like her before. That array of silver hair that blended perfectly with black streaks growing straight from her scalp. It had to be natural, not because I believed the girl really had been stuck in that belltower for eighteen years but because there hadn’t been anyone who colored people’s hair for a living in almost a decade.

Certain jobs were quickly phased out when the church deemed them irrelevant, unnecessary, and possibly influenced by Satan.

“Not your concern,” I told Dera, reminding her that if Sonny had been here she wouldn’t be so brave and asking questions so loosely.

“Apologies!” She chuckled nervously, raising her hands in the air while still shamelessly looking me up and down. “What can I do for you today Mr. Escura?” She put a touch of professionalism back into her tone as she smoothed her pencil skirt down.

“Get her some clothes that don’t have her stickin’ out so much while she’s standing next to me.” I pushed Romina in front of me and tossed the wad of cash at Dera, the dollar signs in her eyes glowing hard enough to keep her deaf, blind, and mute to whatever would go down here today.

I sat in a black velvet chair, scrolling mindlessly through my phone while she sorted through racks of black clothing, picking out what she thought would suit Romina best. I could hear her quiet murmurs anytime Dera asked her anything about the clothes she showed her, but either she didn’t care or the girl had never been given an option on anything in her life before.

“How does she look?” Dera asked, and I didn’t bother to lift my head up or steer my eyes from the screen of my phone to answer.

“Great,” I answered flatly and she scoffed in outrage.

“If you’re going to waste my time, you could at least pretend to give me an ounce of respect for it,” she said bravely, not hiding her annoyance.

I rolled my eyes with a heavy exhale, lifting my gaze up to take in Romina and her new garbs. She wore a shiny black leotard and a black mesh tunic that went down to her thighs in a jagged hem finish. Fishnet stockings peeked through the top of the knee-high old-school Dr. Martens layered with buckles all the way to the top. A silver chain cinched her waist, and a similar chain decorated her neck in a chokehold.

Fuck.

She didn’t look like a little sheep, that was for sure.

But she still wore that innocent expression and the illusion shattered once you examined her face up close. I admired Dera’s work. Her eyes had been painted with dark eyeshadow and her lips adorned a lipstick so black it shined with a hint of blue.

“I’ve got all the bags with the rest of the clothes for you, and some makeup and other things in there so she doesn’t ‘stick out’.” She air-quoted with an eye roll. “Where’d you find this one anyway?” she asked and I cut into her with a look that reminded her to stay in her place. She didn’t fight me on it.

“Leave them by the door, I’ll grab them when we're done down here.” I told her.

“Let’s go,” I called out to Romina and as if I’d picked out the perfect nickname for her, she sheepishly made her way over to my side before we exited Dera’s boutique.

We passed the next few shops and she seemed disinterested in any of their exteriors, still admiring the clothes that had been draped over her. I turned a sharp left into the next vendor and pulled her inside with me. Silver had the best collection of handmade knives on our side of the planet. I had a sneaking suspicion that he was the maker but for all the years that I had known him, he refused to take credit for the work.

“Corvin!” He greeted me before I had a chance to fully step into the small space that was his shop.

It was barely a hundred square feet, but he didn’t need more than that to get his point across. The glass cased cabinet showed an array of handcrafted weaponry that would make any violent fucker smile with glee. Brass knuckles with diamonds lining the edges of the metal, making sure that each hit would not only break but slice as well. Machetes with blades so sharp they could cut air if you tried.

But that wasn’t what I was after.

“Silver,” I greeted him accordingly.

He eyed Romina, but unlike Dera he knew better than to poke into affairs that didn’t involve him.

He was a smart man.

“What can I do for you my friend? It’s always an honor when an Escura choses to spend their time and fortune on my collections.” He grinned, fanning his hand out over the glass case.

I glanced over it trying to find exactly what I was searching for, when it suddenly stood out to me in plain sight. That’s when I noticed her eyes were fixed on it as well, and my decision was made.

“That one,” I told him and he laughed a greedy sound out that let me know I’d picked up something that would feed him for a long time.

It was a beautiful knife with a handle carved out of the purest looking black opal I had ever laid my eyes upon. It gleamed with speckles of red and blue through its dark reflection in the most dazzling way and the blade itself spoke of hundreds of hours of labor under the forging heat. He held it up under the dim light of the shop, twisting it in his hold as each crimson sparkle in the opal reflected off the bulb.

“This is my avatar. Know what I mean?” he explained as he pulled the knife away from my reach before I could grab it for myself to admire.

“No, I don’t,” I said, not bothering to hide the annoyed tone from my voice.

“I spent a long time perfecting this one. It’s special to me,” he said, nearly breaking his arm as he tried to keep it as far from me as possible.

“I thought you didn’t make these?” I asked with a smirk that he returned twice fold.

“Corvy baby, come on.” He winked at me, and I handed a fat stack of cash to pay for the knife.

“You didn’t see me today.” He nodded in agreement.

“I never see you brother. In fact, I don’t recall ever meeting you once in my life.” He laughed and clapped my shoulder hard.

“Let me know if you’re struggling with anything.” I reminded him as I always did when I came around.

I could say it a million times but it wouldn’t matter, the folks around these parts were too proud for any sort of handouts or charity. They wanted to make it through life knowing they could handle whatever was thrown their way, despite what obstacles they had to conquer.

“You’re too good to us as is, Escura. The wife wants to thank you with a meal soon,” Silver said and I nodded an agreement even if he hadn't given

me a date for his invitation yet.

I'd been coming by to buy some sort of blade or weaponry from him a few times a month since I'd met him. I knew he didn't want my money unless it was transactional, so instead I began collecting his collection from him. It was all I knew I could do in terms of helping someone I cared about.

So far he hadn't turned me away yet.

Romina and I exited the shop into the alleyway, and I quickly turned to trap her between my arms.

*OceanofPDF.com*

We exited the strange store and within seconds I found myself imprisoned under Corvin’s hold. I was caged in between both his arms with nothing but a brick wall behind me and his body in front.

“W-what are you doing?” I asked him, doing my best to keep the fear out of my voice but failing miserably.

“I heard you screaming last night. Through the walls,” he said with a husky tone, narrowing his eyes at me.

I didn’t answer, but my exhale stuttered out nervously.

“Sonny,” he said, making my eyes go wide at just the sound of his name. “He doesn’t have limits.” He pulled the beautifully adorned metal in the shape of a crescent moon out from the brown paper bag. “This is for you,” he explained, handing it to me.

“Why?” I asked him, not sure what it was meant for.

“For protection. In case he—” I cut him off before he could finish.

“You mean, in case Sonny tries to do what you’ve already done to me?” I asked him and his upper lip twitched and his scowl deepened.

“Fuck,” he whispered, turning his head away. “Stay away from Sonny, okay? He can get a little…carried away.”

He was the second person to tell me that in the last twenty-four hours and for some reason all it made me do was want to go to him more. He looked like he was about to walk away but then he turned back to me. “Just take the fucking knife, okay?” He pushed it into my hand, and I closed my fingers around the sharp edge of the blade, feeling the sting of it against my skin. The crimson liquid broke through my flesh and coated the beautiful black gemstone that made up the other half of it.

“Don’t fucking hold it like that,” he yelled, prying my fingers open and letting the knife fall down to the ground without care. “Fucking Hell! Have you never seen a knife before?” he asked and I shook my head.

I’d seen knives that were utensils, used to cut and eat food.

This was a crescent shaped marvel with colors belonging outside of this world. It caused pain just the same as anything else in our universe.

He sighed heavily, tearing the edge of his shirt before wrapping the fabric around the palm of my hand then tightening a knot over it to keep it in place.

“The act you're putting on, it only favors Frollo, Romina. Whatever he’s holding over you, you don’t need to pretend for him. We can help you,” he said, almost seeming like he felt sorry for me.

But that would be impossible.

To be sorry he would need to have a soul, and heathens didn’t have souls.

Corvin looked exactly like Felix, a bit bigger in height but what Felix lacked in stature he made up for in charm. My stomach did a sickening

flutter at just the thought of him. The two had the same dark eyes, same dark hair. But Corvin was covered in paintings just like Sonny. Even their faces had words in the same place.

Where Sonny's brow had the words "Son of Satan" above it, Corvin's read "Memento Mori." I knew my Latin well from my weekly lessons with Father Frollo.

Remember to die.

Remember death.

Remember we all die.

Two words that held so much meaning and kept humanity in a false imprisonment. Who could live freely with the threat of death constantly looming over their head like a dark storm cloud, promising to burst?

There was a geometrical flower on the other side of his face and some other symbols I couldn't recognize inked onto his temple. His throat was covered with a dark image of a goat's face, its horns curved downward to the side of his neck and blended into a multitude of geometric patterns peeking out from his black t-shirt.

The three had that in common.

Always black.

Whatever control they had over Frollo, they used it even to exercise the ability to avoid the jade-green uniforms everyone else was forced to don.

"What do you want me to do with this?" I asked him again as I picked up the knife with my uninjured hand, trying to coat my voice with the closest thing to bravery that I could pull out from somewhere hidden inside of me.

"If someone gets too close, and you don't want them there. Just plunge that into their gut, okay?" He raised his eyebrows up and didn't wait for me to acknowledge my understanding before walking away.

I wrapped my fingers around the smooth black stone end of the blade and clutched it tightly to myself before following Corvin out of the alleyway.

No one had ever given me a gift before.

Though I didn't understand the purpose of his gift, or why he cared if I screamed or if anyone tried to hurt me.

Didn't he do the same?

Wasn't he the very same heathen who couldn't even tolerate my presence?

The girl with the short hair stood in front of the shop as if she had been waiting for us, a giant smile painted her face and she waved to Corvin as if he'd been looking for her.

He hadn't been.

"I got a tattoo," she squealed out, hiking the bottom of her pants up to show a bloody little pink blob scarred into her skin.

"What's a tattoo?" I asked and Corvin growled out like my questions were becoming tiresome.

"The same things you see all over me and Sonny," he told me, stretching out his collar as if his face wasn't covered in them as well. "*That.*" He pointed to her ankle. "Is not a tattoo though. What the fuck is that?" he asked her and she grinned.

"It's a strawberry!" she exclaimed.

"Have you ever even had a strawberry?" he asked her, crossing his arms over his chest and she scoffed.

"Duh, of course not. My parents always said my older sister loved the synthetic jam though," she said, a wave of sadness flashing over her expression.

"Where is your sister now?" I asked her.

“She died from the virus.” Her lips made a flat line and she looked away, a strange demeanor that I didn’t expect from someone as bubbly as she was.

“My bad,” Corvin grumbled and scratched the back of his head and she shrugged a response.

I wanted to say something to her, but I wasn’t sure what you were supposed to say to sad people. I’d never seen one with my eyes before, except on TV shows and movies. I’d only ever had to make myself feel better, and even that was a lost cause.

“I’m sorry you’re sad,” I blurted out and Corvin bit his lips together like he was stifling laughter. “What?” I asked and he shook his head but gave me a sideways grin.

“I’m not sad anymore, but thanks,” she said, and I shrugged. “Did you get everything you needed?” she asked and I shrugged before looking over to Corvin for an answer.

“Yeah, no thanks to your terrible taste,” he said with a condescending tone that she didn’t seem one bit phased by.

“I didn’t realize you were going for the Necromancer Barbie look.”

We walked past the first shop and Corvin picked up all of the bags, shoving half of them at Reesa and carrying the other half himself while still debating about something. Their voices dropped to a muted volume and I let my eyes wander through the underground faux streets that made up what Corvin called The Court of Miracles. It was beautiful, something I didn’t have enough words to fully descrive, but the closer you looked the easier it was to see the filth covering the ground and the lack of anything organic growing down here.

But it didn’t matter.

They were free here.

I could appreciate that.

Something I was starting to realize wasn't possible up there, not just for me. There were levels of freedom, and it wasn't something that could so easily be bartered for like Corvin's pretty blade.

"Ay, Ground control to major Tom," Reesa called out, snapping her fingers in front of my face.

"Don't do that shit. Some people don't like that." He smacked her hand away from my face before nudging my chin up with a single finger.

"You good?" he asked and I nodded, clasping his hand and threading my fingers through his.

He looked at me with surprise and pulled away. His eyelids began to flutter quickly and then he pressed his fingers to his temple.

"Are you okay?" I asked so softly I wasn't sure I even heard myself through the loud bustle of the underground market.

"Can you drive?" he asked Reesa and she nodded, eyes perking up at his question.

He tossed her the keys and placed his hand on the wall for support while he walked on. The three of us made our way back to the steel door we'd entered from just a few hours ago, Corvin wincing and breathing heavily.

In the dark of the tunnel, it took longer to get out than to get in. Corvin seemed unsure of which way we'd come in from and even using the light that shined brightly from his phone it didn't help how uncertain and uncomfortable he looked.

After we found the exit from the tunnel back into the hideaway hallway we'd entered from, we stepped in through the hole hidden by the painting once more. We stumbled through the tight, dark hallway once more,

carefully inching our way towards the front door in direction of the light that seeped through the cracks.

Corvin's grip on my arm tightened just as the light hit our faces and his breathing became shallow and erratic.

Just like that night.

"Are you alright?" I asked him again, this time making sure I spoke loud enough for him to hear.

"I need to get to the car, fast." He breathed in and out heavily and Reesa climbed underneath his right arm and I followed suit under his left.

He was giant.

Too big for us to hold up his weight even if we were doing it together.

He was fighting for consciousness and he was struggling to stay lucid.

I could easily see the pain on his face.

It was something I missed the first time it happened, when he held my throat in his hand and squeezed hard enough to make me think I would die.

Reesa unlocked the car and we managed to get him into the back. He sprawled out, sweat dripping down his face and his eyelids fluttering so fast it looked like he might be dreaming.

I thought he was frightening.

Someone to be afraid of.

But now, in this moment, I could see he was more than that. He was also fragile…vulnerable.

Someone who needed to be looked after.

I crawled into the back with him and closed the door.

"What are you doing? Get in the front," he growled out and Reesa stuck the key in the ignition, starting the car.

“You need help,” I told him, placing my hand over his but he recoiled, pulling it back.

“Get in the front. I don’t want to hurt you.” He spoke through clenched teeth like he was holding back a monster that he couldn’t control.

Maybe he was.

“What do you need?” I asked him, his hand gripped around mine and tightened its hold as he wrestled with his own body for dominance.

“There's an orange bottle in the glovebox,” he said and immediately corrected himself once he witnessed the expression of confusion I wore. “The little door in front of the seat. Open it up.” He pointed in between deep breaths.

I crawled to the front seat next to Reesa and opened up the little door he mentioned, finding the orange bottle with some funny sounding words written on it. I brought it to the back and I shook it next to his ear.

“Is this it?” I asked, trying to twist the bottle cap but finding It wouldn’t open up for me.

“Push down first, get one out please.” His words were becoming more and more labored as he struggled to breathe evenly between them.

With his instructions I was able to get the bottle open and pull out one of the tablets for him before placing it in his mouth. He crushed it in between his teeth, making a strange face as he attempted to swallow it down.

“Fuck, that’s awful.”

“Here’s a random old bottle of water,” Reesa shouted from the front and I took it from her, unscrewing the cap and placing it under his mouth for him to drink.

He drank the entirety of the bottle and Reesa put the car in motion. Corvin’s eyes closed all the way, and his breathing became slower, though

not any less labored.

“What happened?” I asked him. “Where do you go?”

“I don’t know. Somewhere that’s hard to come back from. Every time it gets a little bit harder to find something that brings me back,” he said without opening his eyes.

“Is that what happened to you the other night?” I asked him, unsure if it was okay to bring it up.

He didn’t answer. I wondered if I should have been sitting in the front like he asked me to. I was practically sitting on top of him, he had to have been uncomfortably cramped in the tiny back seat of his car. I reached forward to climb into the front but before I could kneel my way to the seat next to Reesa I felt his hand wrap tightly around my ankle.

I looked back, he didn’t open his eyes, but his hand stayed firm around me. I sat back into the seat, trying to get comfortable and make space for myself. It wasn’t possible, he was big and there was no way to sit in the back without being on his lap. He didn’t seem to mind, he had bigger problems to deal with.

His eyes stayed closed for the rest of the ride. I pulled the sheathed knife out of my pants pocket to admire the beautiful gemstone adorning the handle.

“Do you like it?” he asked, though his eyes didn’t open.

“I don’t understand it,” I said honestly. “But it’s beautiful.”

“That is exactly how beautiful things should be. But be careful, because they are the ones that hurt the most.” His eyebrows formed a deep V.

Reesa hit too many bumps but eventually we found ourselves back in front of the chapel, even though that wasn’t where we’d found the car in the first place.

“I’ll go get the other guys,” she said before rushing out of the car.

“Are you awake?” I whispered and he grunted an unintelligible response. “We’re home.”

“This isn’t home,” He chortled out sharply.

“It’s *my* home.” I corrected him, finding myself brave enough with him in this weakened state to remind him that this chapel was mine first before they invaded my space.

“Jackass—we told you to take your pills,” Felix yelled out, slamming his hand into the glass window of the car before pulling the door on Corvin’s side open.

He nearly fell out, but I was guessing that had been part of the point Felix was attempting to make here.

“What happened?” Sonny asked me, opening the door on my side.

“I don’t know.” I shrugged.

“Say goodbye Reesa. You’ve had your fun for today,” Sonny told her just as the two men began to drag Corvin inside.

“Will you let me see her again?” Reesa shouted over to them.

“That’s up to her,” Felix answered and her eyes went wide and a smile coated her face.

“Well, if you want a friend. I’m over there.” She pointed over to the dormitories in the distance.

I knew the building well, though I’d never actually been inside of it. You had to be a student to be able to access most of the buildings on campus aside from the library. Eventually the library was the only place I ever bothered to enter. She leaned forward and wrapped her arms around me, squeezing me into a tight hold.

Once her embrace loosened, I slipped my hand through the top of her pants the same way that Felix and Sonny had done to me before. She swatted me away and pushed me hard against the exterior chapel walls.

“What the fuck are you doing?” she asked, the alarm in her voice sending a cold sweat over me and draping me in anxiety.

I hated making mistakes.

Father Frollo always punished mistakes.

*Do it right the first time, wretched girl, or I will make you sorry.*

“I-I-I thought people were supposed to touch each other?” I asked, realizing something had gone terribly wrong.

“Uh, I mean, yes. People who really, *really,* REALLY like each other do. That’s not what this is Romina. People who like each other usually *talk* about touching each other first,” she said, a terrified look plastered onto her face I couldn’t quite comprehend.

“So, not *everyone*?” I asked.

“What the fuck man?” she asked, raking her hands over her face in the same manner that Corvin had done when he seemed to be beyond his limit. “Have those assholes been putting their grubby paws all over you?”

She didn’t give me time to answer. She burst through the doors of the chapel while the boys were setting Corvin down on the couch. They turned to face her, scowls forming on their faces from her intrusion.

“Hey cunts,” she shouted out, holding their already captivated interest. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing to this poor girl?” she asked them.

“Which thing? You’ll have to be more specific,” Sonny said, no alarm to his voice when he crossed his arms over his chest and waited for her response.

“Um, how about the thing where you just sexually assault her whenever you want? She’s not your fucking sex toy,” she spat out angrily at them.

“It’s not assault. She wants it.” Sonny grinned that expression that made him look twice as terrifying.

“You do realize how that sounds right?” she asked, looking mostly at Felix this time. “Romina tell these fuckwads they can’t touch you anymore, you can come stay in my dorm room.”

“Wait, what?” I asked, not sure how the conversation had taken a turn like this.

“Tell them you don’t want them touching you anymore,” she said and Sonny chuckled in amusement.

“Why would I do that?” I asked the girl who had called herself my friend just a mere moment ago.

“See,” Sonny said, raising his eyebrows up high.

“Fuckin’ hell. You monsters have already brainwashed her.” She exhaled out something that seemed like defeat.

“Sure. If you call being sexually worshiped a form of brainwashing.” Felix laughed under his breath.

“It probably is. This seems wrong. She’s so naive and innocent.” She finally looked over at me like she hadn’t spent this entire time talking about me like I wasn’t even a person in the room.

“Don’t infantilize her. She’s an adult. And don’t talk about her like she’s not here either,” Felix pushed past her to make his way over to me. “Do you want us to stop touching you, Mina?” He grazed his thumb against my cheek and waited for a response.

I shook my head.

Because Corvin was right.

The beautiful things did hurt. And maybe I was a sucker for pain, because I wasn't ready to find out what would happen if it were to stop hurting.

If they went away.

If they left me here.

I think that would hurt the most, more than never having left the belltower at all.

*OceanofPDF.com*

Reesa left after the thousandth time she made me repeat that I was okay and did not want to leave. Maybe I was making a mistake in staying. Maybe I should have taken the out when it was given to me.

I'd felt like a prisoner my entire life under Father Frollo's watch.

This didn't feel the same.

"What did Arlan want?" Felix asked Sonny.

"Wanted an update on our progress. I said we'd made none." He crossed his arms.

We were all standing over Corvin lying on the couch while his eyes did that weird fluttering thing again.

"Who is Arlan?" I asked them.

"He's like a grandfather to us," Felix explained and Sonny scoffed.

"He's the head of our organization. He's preparing to die," Sonny corrected.

“Is he not awake much?” I finally asked after we’d been standing over Corvin for a good twenty minutes.

“This doesn’t usually happen so often. Something’s setting him off.” Sonny sneered, and I wasn’t sure if he was implying that maybe it was me.

Reesa had said that people who touched each other liked each other, but with Sonny I wasn’t sure if what he felt for me wasn’t too far from hatred. Unlike Felix, I didn’t feel that same warmth that pulled me in towards him.

With Sonny I felt the drawing in of a cold vacuum. What I would imagine outer space would feel like, seducing me with its all consuming darkness like nothing else in the world could.

“Did my dumbass brother feed you, Mina?” Felix asked and I shook my head. “Come on then.”

He pulled me by the hand and opened up a cardboard box that sat on the kitchen island.

“It’s pizza.” He held up a slice in offering.

“Here.” Sonny walked over and pulled a smaller version of my tablet from his pocket. “This is for you. It works the same as the iPad but you can call and talk to us from it too.”

It was another gift, and from Sonny nonetheless.

I didn’t know how to respond.

“Take it.” He waved it in front of me.

“You can type here anytime you hear a word you don’t know the meaning of or take a picture of something with this and it’ll tell you what you’re looking at.” Felix came to my side and started showing it to me.

“And this one isn’t restricted to death, so you can actually learn about things that matter,” Sonny added.

“Can’t I learn in school?” I asked them both, hope filling my veins.

“This isn’t a school,” Sonny said before grabbing a piece of the melted cheese bread and walking away.

“He’s not wrong.” Felix shrugged following Sonny’s actions but sat down on a stool instead.

I reached and grabbed a piece of the pizza, bringing it to my mouth and taking a bite of the hot cheesy goodness. I moaned loud enough to force Felix to stop chewing and look up at me. I glanced down, my cheeks flushing with embarrassment that the same noises that came out of me during moments of pleasure with them could come out with food.

But this was the best thing I’d ever eaten in my life.

I’d seen pizza in a few cartoons and movies before but in person everything just kind of took you by surprise. Half the time I was just insecure to be wrong about anything and be penalized for it.

“You’ve really been up there your whole life?” Felix asked, wiping his mouth and hands with a towel as he finished his food.

“Yes,” I answered, looking up to give him the attention he deserved.

“How… How is it that you speak so well?” he asked and I didn’t bother to hide the offended look on my face. “What I mean to say is. You know a lot of words.” He scratched his head like he’d immediately regretted his choice of vocabulary.

“Because I’m smart,” I told him, annoyed, insulted, and a little frustrated. “I read the dictionary fifteen times before I turned twelve.”

“I want to help you. I don’t want to make you feel like you’re dumb or treat you like a child when I explain things that you might not understand. Can you work with me here?”

I nodded, knowing there was a big world of firsts out there I would have to explore someday.

Would I get that chance?

“Good. Let’s go to bed.” He tilted his chin towards the hallway before he stood up and reached his hand out to me.

I took it but as I got off the stool I looked over to his brother, still laying on the couch.

“I think I should stay with him,” I told Felix, who narrowed his eyes at me like he was confused.

“No.” His voice switched from the sweet, warm tone I was accustomed to into a cold one. “Who will keep you from him if he wakes up and it happens again? It’s not safe.” He shook his head and pulled me into him.

“But who keeps him safe?” I asked and he tucked a strand of hair behind my ear.

“*I* do.” His index finger lifted my chin up and he pressed his forehead to mine before taking a deep inhale. “Come.” He urged me again and I looked back at Corvin one last time.

His chest was rising and falling at a quickened pace, but his eyes had calmed down and stayed shut.

“Have I told you how drop dead gorgeous you look?” He hummed in my ear, guiding me to his room. “I’ve been thinking about the way you taste all day.” He made a desperate kind of noise and it made me ache to feel some type of friction between my legs.

He pressed to my back, and just the same way Sonny did, I could feel a hard thickness against my behind. A hum escaped his throat, and he ran his hands up my waist, palming my breasts with both hands. I bit my lip to contain my moan, dropping my head back against his chest while his touch continued to travel wildly across my body.

“You told her you don’t want us to stop touching you.” He asked, I held my breath.

His hands froze.

“Y-yes.” I gave him what he wanted.

His thumbs barely grazed against the hardened peaks of my nipples, sending a bolt of pleasure down my spine. I went to pull some of the clothing off, but he batted my hands away and shook his head.

“No, keep that on.”

He dropped me to the bed with a bounce and I used my elbows to prop myself up. He unbuttoned the shirt he was wearing. The way he pulled the sleeves off slowly before rolling the shirt off felt almost like its own form of torture. The anticipation growing at the bottom of my stomach was turning me into putty. Every one of his muscles were well sculpted and a hard V shape formed its way into his pants. He loomed over me hungrily, his stare filled with something strong enough to kill.

I swallowed a knot.

“Spread your legs,” he said in that husky tone. I obeyed, parting my knees and spacing my feet apart. “I want to taste you.”

My knees buckled together with his words but he crawled over me and spread them apart himself. His fingers teased against the bodysuit I was wearing, rubbing over the thin fabric and driving me insane with need. Finally he unbuckled the clasp and scissored his fingers inside me.

I gasped, clenching my thighs shut.

“What is it?” he asked with a frown.

“It’s wrong, right? That’s why Reesa was so upset?” my voice trembled in anticipation for the truth.

“You’re the only one who can decide that. Why don’t you tell me?” He disappeared between my legs.

I let out a high-pitched squeak once his tongue made contact with my sex, generously licking over my most intimate parts. He worked slow, methodical circles before he closed his lips and sucked.

“Ahh!” I cried out, pulling his hair with my hands and drawing him closer and closer to me.

“Does this feel wrong to you, pretty girl?” he asked, but I didn’t know how to answer.

He sank his fingers inside me, and I whimpered. It didn’t hurt anymore and I could appreciate the sensation now that there wasn’t a burning pain involved. The wet sounds of his fingers moving in and out of me filled his room.

He husked out a feral, throaty sound like my pleasure was causing his undoing.

“You’re making me fucking wild. What the hell am I supposed to do with you, pretty girl?”

My head bounced with each thrust and I hit the headboard of his bed every single time. It didn’t matter. That feeling of tightening that started deep in my core was starting to build again. I clawed at his back and he dove his face down, breathing hot against my center.

“This is the prettiest fucking pussy in the world. I wish you could see how good you fuck my fingers.” He pressed his tongue against me and I gasped loudly, turning my head side to side.

I’d spent the majority of my life being told that anything that gave pleasure was a sin, but I’d never felt anything in this world that compared to the things they could do to me. It was as if my body had been liberated but

my mind was still stuck in the confinement of the mental prison Frollo had built especially for me.

Why?

Why had he done this to me?

So he could dispose of me the first chance he got?

No, there was something I was missing.

Because the very men I'd been led to believe would be my ruin, were somehow becoming my salvation. He sucked harder, only letting go to move his tongue in wild and frantic motions that forced my legs to quake and tremble under his hold.

"Do you like it when I drink straight from your dripping cunt?"

"Ah!" I cried out as the sensation drilled deeper and deeper into my core, his dirty words washing through me like a tidal wave that would drown into my lungs with a violent crash.

I bit my lip as hard as I could, tasting the metal of the blood as the only way to keep my mouth from betraying me and pushing Felix away with false lies. I whined from deep within my throat while my climax crashed all around me in a deafening wave. I quaked under his touch while he kept stroking his fingers in and out of me so slowly it made my mouth water.

He dove back down, licking and swirling his tongue until my hips bucked and I chased a stronger feeling I couldn't define as anything except pure wanting. It felt feral and uncontrollable, like something had taken over me. I let the sensation wash over me like a current and I fisted his sheets in my hands while surge after surge of pleasure poured into and out of me.

"Oh God!" I cried out as it pulled me under, leaving me gasping for breath.

Shipwrecked, bare, and vulnerable.

“He’s not here right now.” His face rose into my view with a sinister smirk.

His eyes seemed darker than I remembered but my vision was hardly reliable, my mind was still spinning from the vortex of pleasure that had been drawn out from inside of me.

He pulled out his fingers, leaving me with a shocking emptiness as I crashed back down to earth, panting heavily and trying to regain my composure. He helped me out of all my netted clothing and leotard and before I knew it he had draped a soft t-shirt over my naked body.

He pulled me into his chest just like he’d done so the other night and buried his nose into my neck.

“Good night, sweet Mina,” he whispered.

I breathed heavily, my thoughts refusing to let my brain turn off. He could sense it too.

“What is it?” he asked.

“This. You. All of you.” I exhaled, “What if it damns me?”

“What if it heals you?”

I pondered the words for so long that I wasn’t sure if he’d already fallen asleep.

“I need to pee,” I whispered and Felix loosened his grip on me enough to let me wiggle out of bed.

I grabbed the knife Corvin had gifted me off the bedside table and wrapped the holster over my thigh, buckling it closed before slipping the blade in. It was a comforting thought, remembering what he said about using it to keep me safe. I’d never been given a chance to protect myself before. I wanted to always have that option nearby.

I turned the doorknob, walking into the steamy bathroom and feeling the waft of the heat hit my skin. Sonny stepped out of the shower, droplets of water running down his painted muscles and rolling down the ridges of his firm abdomen. There was a scar in the center of his chest, nearly invisible at first glance because of the images that covered it but if I focused enough I could see the raised tissue.

I'd forgotten how to blink and my gaze followed a droplet as it made its way south. He was a mirror image of a Grecian statue, all chiseled and hard from every angle. Except, what hung between his legs was nothing like I'd seen in any anatomy book or painting before and I remembered how it looked up close, when it was awake.

"You're drooling." Sonny's voice ran up my spine like a cold chill through an open window, snapping my attention back up to his face.

"N-no I'm not."

He reached for the towel hanging from the hook near the wall, then narrowed his eyes at me. He dropped his hand, deciding to not use it before stepping closer towards me.

Sacrilege dripped from his every pore.

"Did you come looking for me, Pet?" He smirked and I stepped back.

"N-no." I shook my head, and he tilted his chin at me like he wasn't sure if he believed me.

Part of me wasn't so sure either.

I felt like I was somehow always looking for Sonny if he wasn't in the room.

He closed in, his palm reaching over and shutting the door behind me so that when I stepped back again I hit a solid wall. I slid my hand over the holster Corvin gave me and felt the smooth surface of the black opal

handle. I held it up in a threat, but it didn't seem to faze him. His eyebrows creased in the middle, but his mouth seemed to be finding amusement.

"If you're trying to seem unappealing to me, Pet, you're doing a shit job at it."

"S-stay back Sonny. I'm not in the mood for your crazy tonight."

He took another step, and I swung my hand out at his chest, slicing deep into his flesh before he caught my wrist and pulled it away. He tightened his hold until the knife fell loosely from my hand, and I cried out in pain from him squeezing.

"You're just making me want you more, Romina." He brought my fingers to the fresh wound, pushing them in and opening the cut wider to force the blood out faster.

"You're messed up Sonny," I whispered, almost hoping he couldn't hear me.

"Am I?" he asked me.

"That's why you like to hurt me," I said with a nod.

"Do I hurt you?" I wasn't prepared for the question. I wasn't sure that I had the right answer.

"Uh- it's, it's, it's uh- it's complicated," I stammered out, unsure of myself.

"And what does that say about you? Do you enjoy pain?" He smirked something sinister like he could see through me in a way I refused to see myself.

He pulled my bloodied fingers back and wiped them over my lips, spreading the taste of liquid metal over my tongue. He took his thumb and brushed it over my lip, pulling it down roughly before manipulating my chin and lifting it up to the angle I'd grown accustomed to by his height.

He bent his neck down, pressing his forehead to mine before pulling my chin up higher with an aggressive tug. His lips were on mine before I could exhale out the breath I'd been holding in my lungs. My tongue brushed along the inside of my lips tasting his blood again just before his tongue invaded my mouth.

That same hostile manner he took with everything else he did, followed him here, even in what seemed to be an almost tender moment. Aside from the blood. I'd read plenty of books where princesses were gifted with a kiss once they'd been rescued by their princes. But these men weren't heroes, and they hadn't saved me. He pushed his way into my mouth with no abandon, raking his tongue over mine and letting the pressure of his fingers soften around my jaw.

My hands reached for him, needing to touch, to feel something real before I lost my head in the void of darkness inside of him that kept calling to me. I should have been afraid, but every time I got close to Sonny, every fear, every uncertainty stayed frozen deep inside of me.

He pulled back, breaking our connection with a knowing look in his eyes.

"Come find me when you *are* in the mood for my crazy." He reached back, finally grabbing the towel off the hook before wrapping it around his waist.

He stepped to my side and opened the door once more before walking through it, leaving me stunned and breathless. A state all three of these men were somehow easily capable of leaving me in with very little effort on their part. I touched my fingers to my lips again, still feeling the pressure of Sonny's mouth against mine.

The snake coiled up my arm in my dream just moments before I woke up in the dead of the night, feeling a tugging on my chest like my soul was being beckoned from somewhere else. Felix's arm was still draped over me heavily and I looked over to find him fast asleep, not a care written into the expression on his face. I lifted his arm off of me and stood from the bed, the magnetic sensation growing stronger the more I decided to follow it.

I stepped forward, feeling the cold bite of the floor against the bottom of my feet while I urged myself closer to whatever called to the throbbing ache inside of me.

It was almost painful to try to ignore it.

My fingers found the handle of the door and with a loud creak I pulled it open.

"Careful what you seek, pretty girl," Felix mumbled sleepily.

A part of me begged to heed his warning while the other didn't care to listen.

Had I always been this self-destructive? Was it something they unlocked in some part of me? Or had it always been there, suppressed, like everything else Frollo tried to hide away inside of me? My feet tapped against the wooden floorboards slowly, and the calling inside of me grew to a force that felt like it could burst from my chest. My limbs trembled while I stood in front of his door.

I had found myself at the lion's den.

I was Daniel, and he would rip me apart with nothing but his claws and teeth. I was not blameless. I came here of my own volition. I was aching to feel anything that was somewhat real, even if it was pure unadulterated terror.

Here I was offering myself up like a lamb to slaughter. My butcher waited with a sharpened knife. It was somewhat relieving to know that for once there was someone out there who wanted to keep me around, even if it might have been because they enjoyed my pain.

I stood there, breathing heavily at his door.

“Enter.” His voice called to me from inside and I pushed the door open.

He put his book down on his lap, lifting an eyebrow up at me.

“I called for you,” he said and I twisted my face in confusion.

He smiled, it didn’t belong on his face.

“You felt it.” He smirked and I nodded.

“Yes.” I corrected myself and his eyes softened in a way that showed me that I’d pleased him.

“What did you come here for, Pet?” He was leaning his back against the headboard, one knee bent while his arm rested on top, and the other leg laid flat on the bed.

He was still shirtless, the fresh wound on his chest from the knife was red and puffed up. Uncovered and exposed.

“You called me,” I answered by repeating his own words and he let a crooked grin show.

“You could have ignored it. If you wanted to,” he said, looking up at me through hooded eyes.

“It didn’t feel like I could have,” I told him, stepping closer into the room.

“That’s because you didn’t want to. You can’t lie to yourself.” I stepped again. “Faster,” he whispered and I nearly dove onto the bed from the pull of his command.

My chest rose and fell with my breath in dramatic bursts while I looked up at him, that bright blue tidal wave pulling me under. It was hard to breathe around Sonny. Hard to remember to breathe, hard to want to breathe, and even more so impossible to figure out what it meant that I kept coming back for it.

“You kissed me,” I told him and he tilted his head sideways with curiosity.

“Do you want me to do it again?” he asked and I knew better than to answer silently.

“Yes.” His mouth was instantly on mine, this time without so much pressure, so much need.

It was slow, like he was trying to savor it. His tongue pushed its way in, taking control while it explored my mouth, and he sucked the oxygen right from my lungs. A heat was building inside of me and a need to reach out and touch him urged me on. My fingers gently grazed against the cut I’d made. He wrapped his hand around my wrist, tightly squeezing to keep me from touching any further.

He broke the kiss.

“You have to do it too,” he growled, pulling back and looking at me.

“Do what?” I asked.

“Move your tongue, your lips. You can’t just sit there with your mouth open.” His hand reached behind my head and he tugged on my hair with a sharp pull.

“Ahh!” I cried and he took the opportunity to lock his lips onto mine once again.

This time I followed along, trying not to fight with the movements of his tongue but use them to guide mine against his. I wrapped my arms around his neck. He pulled me up to sit on his lap and we continued to kiss, that familiar feeling slowly building inside of me again as every sensation heightened from his touch.

A moan left my chest and his hand reached into my hair. His palm cupped my breast, massaging while he matched the rhythm of his tongue against mine. It was almost enough to get me to forget the chaotic thoughts swirling through my head.

Almost.

I pulled back and he eyed me questioningly.

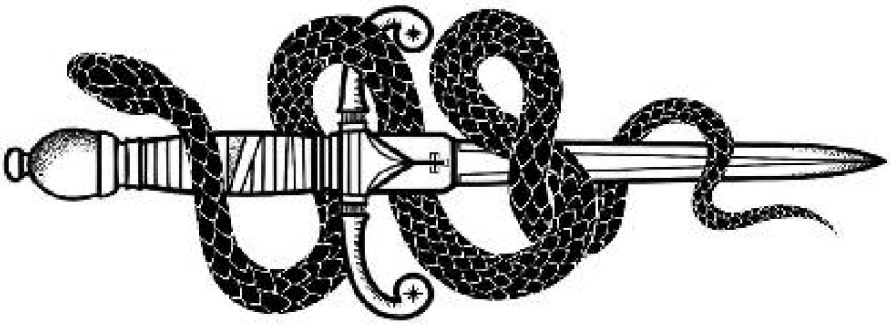
“Say what you’re thinking.”

“What do you want from me?” I asked, unsure where I’d conjured the strength to find the words inside of me.

“Everything,” he said, shaking his head like he couldn’t believe I didn’t already realize it. “I want everything you can give me, including the air in your lungs. I want your blood. I want your life. I want your fucking death Romina.” He squeezed my breast under his hand again before pressing his lips against mine once more. “Will you give it to me?”

“Yes,” I whispered out the word, sealing an agreement heavier than a deal with the Devil himself.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

I’d never kissed anyone before her.

Romina was the saddest song I’d ever heard, and her melody called out to the most twisted parts of my soul.

She wasn’t a list of all the things she’d never had before, even though I’m sure it was longer than I could imagine. Romina was a longing. A wanting to live to the fullest despite the hand she’d been dealt. I wanted to fill up on her until my own selfish desires were gone.

I couldn’t pretend that the girl in front of me was the enemy or untrustworthy anymore, because when I looked at her, I could see the truth as clear as day. She was just another casualty in Frollo's book of sins. Just another name his Devil would read out loud when tallying up his wrongdoings before doling out whatever punishment he deemed fit for someone as corrupt as he was.

I couldn’t allow the sum of her worth to be totalled by that.

When I looked at her, I saw everything I wasn’t, everything I couldn’t be.

I had a craving deep inside my soul to mold her into what I needed her to become. Something stronger, something that couldn't be penetrated by the sharp hatred of Frollo's God.

"Don't promise what you can't give me, Pet." I warned her. "Because I *will* collect." I stroked my thumb against her jaw and her eyes sparkled with a wild gleam to them.

"You told me not to tell you no." I eyed her through narrowed eyes.

She didn't tremble under my hold, she wasn't the same fearful thing I'd witnessed just a few short days ago.

She already knew me.

Knew what I needed, even if she didn't know why.

"Because I know you don't mean it," I told her and she bit her lip nervously. "Do you?" I asked and she looked down.

She had barriers.

Walls she'd put up to protect her mind from Frollo's fuckery.

I recognized them with ease because I'd been patching up the holes she created in my own walls. It was sheer luck she was a functioning human being and that likely had something to do with all the books she read.

"Why did you give me this?" she asked, holding up the phone.

"It was a gift," I answered.

She pulled up a browser and typed 'why do people give gifts?' into the search and showed me the results.

"Yeah, just be careful where you look. Anyone can put anything online. Even liars." She gave me a perplexed look.

"Why would anyone do that?" It was so genuine and innocent.

The kind of thing where mere hours ago I would have thought for sure was an act.

And now all I could think about was Arlan taking her away from me.

But maybe I'd get lucky and he'd just die first.

"Some people enjoy the madness. They revel in the chaos." I grabbed the back of her neck to pull her in and kiss her once again.

When she said she felt a pull to me, I knew I was fucked. Because I'd felt that same pull too and I'd cut my hand off to bet the Escuras knew exactly what I was talking about. It was intoxicating to be around her, and when she wasn't around, she still occupied every thought in my head.

It made no fucking sense.

I pulled her hair harder, a whimper crawled from her throat straight into mine, our tongues still clashing together wildly. My hand still cupped her breast, and I rubbed my thumb in circles over her nipple. She gasped into my mouth. Her eyes stayed closed, but her hips began to move with a wanton motion, fighting for fiction while her body begged her for release.

I broke our kiss to whisper in her ear, "Ask me to touch you."

She exhaled heavily and her eyes fluttered open.

"I-I can't." She shook her head nervously.

"Tsk. Too bad then, I can't give you what you want." I tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, and she whined when I held her hips in place, preventing her from humping my leg.

I flipped her onto her back. I prowled over her, looking down to see the raw need building inside of her. She reached her hand down but before she could slip it into her panties I pushed it away.

"You don't touch yourself. If you want pleasure you'll ask for it." I laid out new rules for her. "You understand?"

She nodded for a brief second and corrected herself. "Yes."

“Now tell me what you want, Pet.” I reached down to graze my fingers over the wet spot on her panties, and she raised her hips automatically reacting. “I want words.” I laced my voice with authority.

“Please,” she whimpered out so beautifully. “Make me feel good.” It was so meek and pathetic.

But it was good enough for me.

I pulled her panties down to her knees. She was absolutely soaked, a string of her arousal stretched as it connected to her underwear, and I couldn’t resist slipping my fingers inside.

“Oh,” she gasped out a moan from the quick contact.

I pulled my fingers out and rubbed them back and forth over her clit, watching as her head tipped back. Her fingers gripped the sheets on the bed like she was already close. Her breath had turned into short spurts like she couldn’t even be bothered to focus on staying alive.

I couldn’t resist wrapping my hand around her beautiful neck again. Her eyes blinked open, only half the amount of fear I’d seen that first time. I didn’t squeeze, instead I circled my fingers over her clit, using her arousal to coat her until she was so slick she was practically crying for release.

She came with a high-pitched squeal, shaking her head and whispering, “No” over and over despite her walls greedily pulsating around my fingers. She lied to herself, but she couldn’t lie to me.

“I’m going to put my whole hand in there,” I told her, inserting a third finger and stretching her more than she could probably handle.

Her eyes grew with panic.

“Is that a problem?” I asked, slowly thrusting all three fingers in and out of her while her hips matched my rhythm.

“It won’t fit!” She covered her face with her hands like she was embarrassed.

“I think you want it.” I smirked, while I tried to get a fourth finger inside. “Don’t you?”

“Yes!” she screamed and I grinned at her with a vicious confidence. “No. No.” She corrected herself again.

I pulled her hands from her face, revealing far too much shame reddening her skin.

“What did I say about telling me no?” I asked, tightening my hold on her neck.

“I don’t say no to you,” she rasped.

I raised an eyebrow as I tried to figure her out.

“Then why do you do it?” I asked her but she stayed silent, like she didn’t know the answer herself.

“Pick a safeword,” I told her but she looked at me in confusion.

“Huh?” she asked, leaning forward to reach for her phone but I stopped her.

“You say no too much. We both know you don’t mean it Romina, let’s stop playing these games.”

“Um—” She started but I cut her off.

“Forget it. Just pick a word you don’t use often. Something you’d never say unless you wanted me to really stop.”

“And you’ll really stop if I say it?” she asked me.

“If you say it, yes”

“Safeword.” She breathed out without a second thought.

“Safeword?” I asked.

“Safeword.” She confirmed with a nod.

With her throat still in my grasp, I squeezed tighter, slowly moving my fingers in and out of her again, giving up on my fourth finger plan.

It was a high expectation anyway.

I curved my fingers, hooking upwards and finding her g-spot with ease, the light contact was enough to force a whimper from deep within her chest. I picked up the pace, using my palm against the bundle of nerves between her legs while I pushed my fingers in and out of her. Both her hands found my forearms and she clung on, thrashing her head from side to side again with closed eyes.

“No! No! Stop! Stop!”

“Remember your safeword,” I whispered into her ear and her gaze locked onto mine with understanding.

She nodded her head, and I thrusted harder, the pleading cries for me to stop never changing.

Maybe she needed this.

Maybe Frollo had fucked with her head so badly that she could only accept this kind of pleasure if she lied to herself and pretended like she didn’t want it.

Maybe she needed me to be the villain.

To take from her, so that she wouldn’t have to deal with the guilt or shame he’d embedded into her just over the idea of giving it freely.

I needed to prove her wrong.

That there was no shame.

Not when it came to me and her.

“Sonny!” She cried my name out as she unraveled into a million pieces, the look on her face was an indescribable kind of beauty you couldn’t bottle

or replicate. It was hers alone, but when she shattered like this, I got to steal a piece of it for me too.

She breathed out heavy exhales, her chest rising and falling while I continued working my fingers inside her, trying to draw out her pleasure for as long as possible. I pulled each finger out slowly once I was sure her climax had ended before putting them in my mouth one by one to lick clean.

She brushed the silver and onyx strands of hair away from her face. My phone buzzed against the nightstand and I exhaled, preparing myself for the call I knew I couldn't ignore.

"Yes?" I answered.

"You've found a girl." My adoptive father didn't bother to make small talk, my gaze darted over to her, still panting and cheeks flushed from her climax.

I ran my fingers over her clit once more before dipping them inside her again. She whimpered, sucking both her top and bottom lip together in between her teeth. She shook her head back and forth rapidly, like she was still too sensitive from her orgasm.

"Just a stray student. Nothing to concern yourself over." I lied.

If Arlan already knew she existed there was no point lying. It likely meant he already knew more than me, which wasn't a good thing, but I couldn't in good conscience just hand her over to him.

He would devour her.

Then he would spit her back out into one of the poorhouses when he was done and her mind had crumbled to dust from his fuckery.

"I'll be the judge of that. Bring her to me at your earliest convenience, Carmine." He used my father's name, a name I despised because it had

nothing to do with me.

The same name my mother ensured would turn into nothing but a whisper the moment he brought his first mistress home to sleep with in front of her. After that I became Sonny, something less of a reminder of my father's ugliness.

"I'm in school, remember? I recall it was your decision. I'll see what I can do," I said, clicking the phone off as quickly as possible.

If he wanted her, there was nothing I could do to keep her away. Eventually he'd get his talons into her, shred her to pieces. It was the only thing he was good at. Everyone he touched turned to hate.

But I could make him wait.

It was bad enough the students on campus were salivating over her. Lincoln Rugsley had eyed her for far too long for my comfort. That guy. Sometimes, during calculus, I daydreamed about cutting him open and hanging him from his insides.

He just had one of those faces you know?

It was my mistake. I owned it. I shouldn't have paraded her in front of Frollo and the rest of the student body during a clouded moment of rage. Now they circled above like vultures waiting to pick at her carcass.

"Sonny?" She dug me out of my head.

"Reesa," she said the annoying girl's name, startling the shit out of me because I definitely wasn't thinking of her at all right now, and the fact that she was caught me off guard. "She said that people who touch each other, the way that… you… and Felix touch me. She said that they really like each other?" She asked with a nervous laugh.

Her insecurities were showing and it made me want to unhinge my jaw and eat her alive.

“And you want to know if I like you?” I asked, raising both eyebrows high into my forehead.

She nodded and I hardened my stare, letting her know I didn’t like her response.

Or rather, the way she responded.

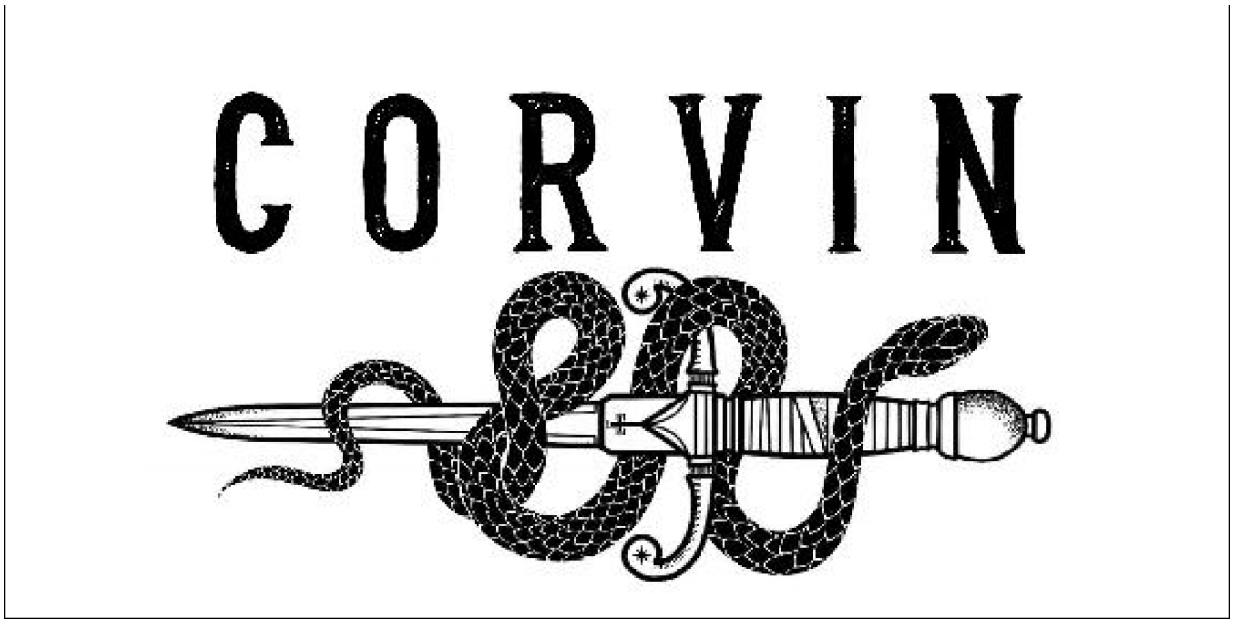
“Don’t ask me that again, Pet. You may not like the answer.” I looked at her with a sobering stare and she looked down, her heart visibly splintered into pieces from my answer.

“Go. Go back to Felix’s room,” I told her and she padded away without so much looking back in my direction.

I didn’t need her to try to pry her way into my thoughts or my heart.

Especially if he’d be taking her away from me.

*OceanofPDF.com*




I woke up to feet tangled into mine.

A confusing realization, since I'd last remembered being at the Court of Miracles.

Once I opened my eyes, I could see the girl asleep on the opposite end of the couch, curled up as much as possible like she was trying to avoid getting in my way. It was unnecessary, the couch was gigantic, so despite me being six-foot-three, there was plenty of room. She was asleep sitting up, but her feet entwined through my legs like she'd been searching for warmth throughout the night.

Sonny was insistent on calling her his pet but so far I hadn't seen him actually take any responsibility for her and a large part of me kept wondering why in hell we felt any obligation to do anything but send this girl off to the poorhouses.

It might not have been luxurious, but at least there, people were getting hot meals every single day. Could the same have been said for her if she

had been locked up in that belltower all week before we'd found her?

Or rather, before she stumbled into my room?

My body was still sore. Even if it hadn't been a long one.

They would give credit to the meds of course, reinforcing the need for me to take them. Felix thought I was too stuck in my own ways, that I didn't want to take them because I thought it affected how others saw me.

I didn't give a shit what other people thought about me, if they thought this was a handicap or if it made me less than them in any way. No, I hated the meds because of how they made me feel. A groggy fucking zombie who couldn't keep his memories straight and had a hard time getting a boner from all the fucking benzodiazepines.

It wasn't like it kept me from shutting down or kept me from needing a three day stay at a crypt following an episode. It just locked my body down, kept me sedated and docile.

It wasn't for my benefit.

It was for everyone else's.

"What the fuck are you doing out here?" I asked, my voice raspy from sleeping fourteen to fifteen hours.

Her eyes sprung open like she hadn't been asleep at all.

"Uh… Felix was asleep, I didn't want to bother him after—"

"After she came her face off in Sonny's room." Felix walked into the room, grabbing an apple from the fruit basket and taking a bite out before winking at her. "You should have come in anyway. I sleep better when I'm holdin' on to something beautiful."

She gave a sheepish smile like she had no reason to argue with anything he'd said.

“The fuck is happening here?” I asked, yawning and stretching for the first time in too long.

I fucking hated missing out.

“I think we’re keeping her,” Felix said with a mouthful of apple before sitting on the arm of the couch and draping his own over her shoulder and bringing her closer to him. “Did you sleep well, or did this giant bastard take up the whole couch?”

“He was here first,” she said, like her moral compass made her somehow stick up for *me* in this whole thing.

“No pretty girl, technically *you* were here first.” He laughed before placing a kiss on her cheek.

“What’s on the agenda for today?” I asked, ignoring any attempt to actually discuss this girl or what her presence here meant in any way for us.

“We’re gonna talk about why you’re blacking out so often.” Sonny walked into the room, meticulously folding his sleeves over his forearms, scowl already set in place for the day.

“Or, we’re not. Maybe it’s the fact you sent me out with two rando bitches.”

“Oh? Is that so? Are you a rando bitch, Pet?” Sonny asked her as he passed by her, brushing a finger under her chin to lift her gaze up to him.

She pulled out a phone and typed some things onto it before looking back to Sonny to shake her head.

“No,” she answered vocally, drawing a crooked smile from him that she couldn’t see because she dropped her gaze back down too soon.

He noticed and narrowed his eyes at her.

I chuckled.

*I* noticed everything.

They both looked at me but didn’t bother to look back at each other.

“So what, while I was out, you both flipped the narrative, deciding she’s *not* working for Frollo, is *not* the enemy, and is *somehow* trustworthy enough to stay here. In our home?” I asked.

“It’s her home,” they both replied simultaneously.

Predictable for Felix, and he’d probably lose interest in a month.

But Sonny? I’d never seen him give this much attention to anything that didn’t have bound pages.

“For the first time in his life, Sonny Santorini has a fucking crush. Would you look at that Fe?” I crossed my arms over my chest knowing Sonny wouldn’t fuck with me after an episode.

If his eyes could have burned holes through me though, the motherfucker would have smoked me alive. His stare was filled with nothing but sheer contempt.

“Shh!” Felix hissed out dramatically. “Don’t ruin a good thing, I’m literally basking in this. You know how he gets when you point out what a good job at being human he’s doin’.” Felix laughed, moving over to the kitchen and pulling random things out of the fridge.

Sonny acted like we weren’t talking about him at all, sauntering over to the island and sitting down like he was just waiting for Felix to drop a hot meal in front of him. I looked over to the girl and she had her head dropped like she was fucking shy or something.

“You’re telling me you let Sonny fuck your brains out but you’re too shy to have us talk about it in front of you?” I pointed out crudely.

“Who said I *let* him do anything?” She asked quietly.

“She doesn’t stop him.” Felix snorted, shrugging when she looked up at him, her face flushed with embarrassment.

“That’s right, isn’t it Pet? You take it like a good girl, don’t you?” He glanced over at her, eyes still narrowed suspiciously like there was a secret between the two of them.

She bit her lip like she was holding back an answer.

Curious.

“You wanna learn how to get him where it hurts?” I asked her and she lifted her head up to look at me, eyes wide like I’d captured her interest.

“Take your pills,” Sonny said dryly without bothering to turn his head to look at me.

I clenched my molars hard enough that I could hear the bones squeaking in my mouth. I stood up, too fast and still tried to pretend like I wasn’t one wrong turn of my head away from my vision going white.

Standing up for the first time in over half a day was a bitch.

She rose up to meet me, holding on to the underneath of my forearms while she blinked up at me as if she’d be able to hold my size up if I went down. I got my bearings straight, taking a deep breath and bringing the oxygen back into my body before I clasped my hand around her wrist while she still held on to me.

I pulled her behind me, forcing a startled gasp from her but no other sign of protest as her feet padded along behind me.

“Where are we going?” she asked softly but I didn’t bother answering, she’d see soon enough.

I stopped in my room, grabbing the duffle bag and throwing it over my shoulder before dragging her through the busted steel door and up the attic steps. Her shoulders relaxed once we’d crossed the threshold. Like she felt safe up here.

Comfortable.

I dropped the bag with a heavy thud but she barely turned her neck to acknowledge it, walking in front of me like she was leading *me*. I sat on the shitty little bed that had already collected an impressive amount of dust in her absence. Or maybe it had always been that dusty.

Hmm.

She'd turned around to face me again and when I looked back at her she quickly shifted her gaze down as if she had been reading the thoughts right out of my head. If what Felix said was true then this girl was a fucking tragedy.

She was the kind of beautiful that broke your fucking heart and now I knew why.

A girl like her was the kind of light that the world snuffed out the first chance it got.

That's why we preferred the darkness anyway.

It didn't discriminate.

Didn't turn anyone away.

The best things grew in the dark.

"Why don't you take your medicine?" she asked me and my upper lip peeled up instinctively.

"Don't start that shit with me." I flared my nostrils and she shrunk down a bit in size.

I ripped a paper target from the pad in the bag and pinned it up against a bare wall before pulling out the box of knives. Her eyes grew when she took in the size of my collection. I picked out an oak handled tactical blade and without sparing too much time looking at the paper I launched it at the bullseye.

It leaned left but was still damn close to the middle.

“You got the knife I got you?” I asked her and she nodded, pulling it free from the holster.

She did a lot of fucking nodding, unless Sonny was around. She seemed to save most of her words for him. I didn’t mind.

She didn’t seem anywhere near as scared of the bastard as I thought she should be. In fact, I’d almost say she somehow seemed almost enthralled by him, which only made me wonder what the fuck was wrong with this psychopath we were now apparently sharing a home with.

She handed the knife over to me and I examined it.

“This is dirty.” I looked at her questioningly, recognizing the dry blood staining the blade.

“Sonny… in the bathroom… yesterday…” She stumbled through her words, and I smirked at her pathetic attempt to explain herself.

“Who liked it more? You cutting him, or him getting cut by you?” I raised my eyebrows high, waiting for her answer.

Her mouth gaped open as the gears in her brain worked full speed to catch her up to the fact that I’d set her up, and that the knife was most definitely *not* going to protect her from Sonny. Her face went red, and she tried to bite her lips to hide her expression.

It didn’t work.

“You *knew*?” she whisper-yelled like she couldn’t believe it.

“That Sonny was into some freaky shit? Yeah. And now I know you are too.” I pointed out and she opened her mouth wider like she was going to dispute somehow, but she failed to find an argument.

She ripped the knife out from my hand and her nostrils flared at me angrily. She didn’t break eye contact and she threw the knife at the wall

with all the rage her tiny little body could contain without bursting. It would have been epic, but the knife just bounced off the wall and hit the ground.

I barked out a laugh and her eyebrows furrowed hard into her face.

“So what is it, little lamb? You embarrassed that you like what you like, or is it just that Catholic guilt eating you up? Archbishop’s God got all your panties in a bunch?” I asked, picking up another knife and throwing it at the target, this time getting the red dot in the middle.

I handed her another knife.

She took it, her lips pressed to a flat line like she wasn’t impressed at my previous throw and was somehow annoyed at me.

It was kind of fucking cute, not a reaction I’d seen from her before and for some reason it felt more genuine than her little innocent act. Okay so maybe she was pretty innocent, but you couldn’t call a girl that, when you just found out she was getting off to cutting your friend while they boned.

I was pretty sure Felix was fucking her too.

Which just circled me back to that same deep loathing inside me.

I fucking hated missing out.

Being left out.

Always being a few steps behind.

She turned to face the target and swung her arm backwards before thrusting the blade at the paper, this time it actually hit the target, but still bounced off without sticking to the wall. She was a caricature of an old-timey cartoon with steam coming out of her ears while she flared her nostrils even wider and let out a high pitched grunt of frustration without ever opening her mouth.

I tried to hide my amusement but when she glanced up at me, it only fueled the silver-haired tiny ball of rage. She grabbed another knife but this

time I interfered, ready to give her some pointers.

“Want some help?” I asked, holding her arm back before she hurled one of my favorite knives against the termite ridden walls.

“Yes.” She narrowed her eyes at me like she wasn’t happy about it.

“Pull your shoulders back,” I draped my fingers over her and adjusted her posture for her. “Keep your wrist firm, and hold it like this.” I repositioned her hand so that she was gripping the handle like a hammer, the point of the blade facing backwards.

“Now, keep your elbow tucked in tight, and take a deep breath.” She followed each cue like she lived for taking direction. “Focus on where you want the blade to go, and try to imagine you want it to go through the bullseye, not just hit it.”

She batted her eyelashes up at me like she was trying to take all the information in, I pulled back to let her have another try and she turned her gaze to the target. She squared her shoulders and with a sharp jerk the knife flew and landed on the wall an inch to the side of the paper. She twisted her head my way sharply for approval and a fox-like grin spread across her face.

“Why don’t you take your medicine?” she asked again and I held back from rolling my eyes.

“Because I don’t like what it does to me.” I looked everywhere but at her. “It’s like being trapped inside yourself. Like watching someone else drive the car off the road.”

“I understand.”

She didn’t wait, she grabbed another blade and went at it again, this time hitting the paper and not straying too far from the bullseye itself. She let out a proud squeal to herself and reached into the box again. She threw knife

after knife until eventually she looked over my way again and raised an eyebrow, she held out a knife to me.

An offering.

I kicked off the wooden post and closed in on her. I took my blade from her hand, facing her the same way she had done with me so that the target was to my side. Not daring to stray my gaze from the constellations shining through hers I drew my elbow back and launched it at the wall. She turned her head, her eyes telling me that I'd impressed her without me having to check the target for my work.

"How do I learn to do that?"

"First you get good at it, then you get better," I told her and she frowned her eyebrows at me like she wasn't content with that response. "As it is with all things in life."

"I wouldn't know," she said dryly with a shrug.

"Well, now you can. If you want to practice, just let me know." I grabbed the empty box and walked over to the wall to pull the knives.

"This… this isn't going to keep Sonny away is it?" she asked like she already knew the answer.

She thought it was another set up.

"Do you actually want it to?" I asked her and she bit her lip, averting her eyes to the ground. "Well… don't let *him* know that."

She scrunched her eyebrows in the middle like she didn't understand.

"Sonny has this way about him, where he can just get people to do whatever he wants and maybe it's because he knows what they want before they can even admit it to themselves. But don't let him know that he has the upper hand. Make him need it too."

"Why are you telling me this?" she asked so innocently.

“Because I’ve never seen either of them become so obsessed with anyone like they have you. They’ll creep their way inside you, and you won’t recognize the person you’ve turned into until after they’ve had their way with you. So, just know that you have power there too. Make them want it just as bad.”

She looked like she was considering it, but she shook her head and began to walk the opposite direction.

“He doesn’t want anything from me. Except maybe to hurt me.” She climbed up the spiral staircase and I followed her into the old bell tower.

I didn’t think any of it still worked in any way, and it smelled like there had been entire generations of rat colonies that had passed through here. She seemed immune to it.

“That may be so, but if you like the pain, then doesn’t that make you two the perfect match?” She looked back at me like she was appalled that I could make such an observation.

She grabbed a broomstick that was leaning on a wooden post and used it to pull the rope hanging from the center of the bell towards her, without her falling down fifteen feet to the attic. She offered the rope to me and raised an eyebrow in challenge.

“What? You want me to ring the bell?” I asked her.

“Hold tight,” she whispered in my ear and with a labored shove she pushed me off the platform.

“Oh shit!” I wrapped my wrist over the rope, the clanging of the bell reverberating through every inch of my body.

It was a buzzing sensation that woke every nerve ending in my flesh and echoed deep inside of me each time I went back and forth and the bell

chimed louder each time. The roar of my laughter bounced over the walls of the bell tower along with the music of the old cast iron relic.

I used my hips to propel myself harder on the rope and took advantage of the momentum to swing higher and let go, landing on my side next to her, clutching my stomach with cramps of laughter from the thrill of the experience. She looked down at me, hinged at the hips and her face too close to mine for comfort if it were a person with any sort of social decorum.

But she didn't have any, and that fox-like grin spread over her face again mischievously. Maybe she wasn't so bad after all.

"What the fuck is happening here?" The sound of Sonny climbing up the spiral staircase, skipping three steps at a time alerted us to his presence before his voice did.

I continued cackling, my abs hurting from the wild rush of freedom she'd granted me momentarily. I ignored Sonny but his scowl deepened and soon Felix was right behind him. The quiet filled the room awkwardly as my laughter dissolved and their clear disapproval loomed over like a sobering cloud of smoke threatening to burst and dissipate.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Felix yelled, piecing together the puzzle to try and figure out what we'd been up to.

Romina backed up from me, a shade of fear painted over her face as she distanced herself from me and the angry men fixated on us.

"Chill out, I'm fine." I tried to diffuse their anger, standing up and putting myself between her and them.

"You've been out for longer than you've been lucid the last three days." Felix took over, knowing Sonny preferred it that way when it came to issues with my health or my ability to maintain control over my consciousness.

“I’m fucking fine aren’t I?” I straightened my posture, coming to my full height.

It wasn’t a huge difference in size, but I took advantage of it when I could or when the occasion demanded it. The line of Sonny’s jaw hardened, and I could practically hear his teeth squeaking as the bone ground on itself.

“This could have gone wrong in so many ways dude.” Felix took a softer tone but I turned my cheek the other way.

I was tired of being treated like a child.

People who were *normal*, loved to do that to anyone who didn’t function on the same level as them. But I couldn’t resent my brothers for worrying.

At the end of the day, I just didn’t have the spoons for it anymore.

It might not have been the brightest idea, but then again, it *hadn’t* been my idea.

She didn’t fucking know any better though.

*So they didn’t need to know.*

“I get it man. It could have been bad. I don’t know what I was thinking. Won’t happen again.” I looked between the two of them, Sonny crossed his arms and narrowed his gaze my way but peered behind me every few seconds to focus on Romina.

Felix and Sonny communicated silently before turning on their heels and padding down the staircase. I walked over to the girl, still hunched over in a far corner and fearful. I extended my hand in front of her. She looked up at me, blinking a few times before reaching up with both hands to wrap around my arm.

“You lied to them,” she whispered and I winked back at her with a crooked smirk.

“Sometimes the truth does more harm than good. You know?”

The smile reached her eyes, narrowing them and making her look much sweeter than that raven silverish hair allowed for. There was something about the dark-haired girls, no matter how sweet they painted themselves out to be, they always tended to dive head first into oblivion, when presented with the opportunity.

As if the call of the void was simply too loud to ignore, too magnetizing to not plunge deep inside of the madness and claim it for their own. Romina wore sheep's clothing, but there was a wolf inside her too.

She just didn't know it yet.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I woke up with a loud gasp, the drowning part of the dream again. I had started to realize it wasn't multiple dreams, just one long one. It played out like a story and some nights I only watched different pieces of it, almost seeming episodic. No matter how hard I tried to think of anything else before bed, it was always the same. I reached down feeling the sticky liquid between my legs and the ache in my back told me my monthly visitor had come. I groaned, and then froze once I remembered where I was.

"Oh, shit." Felix looked down at his bed and I scurried off in a panic.

"I'm so sorry," I shouted, frantically attempting to pull the blood soaked sheets off the bed in a bout of fear.

I had gotten really good at tracking the exact time it always came so that Father Frollo would know to bring me provisions ahead of schedule. He'd come with a couple months worth of disposable diapers and they would last me until they ran out, forcing me to fumble about asking him again. 'The horrors of the female body,' he called it, anytime I inconvenienced him.

“Hey, it’s okay, it’s okay.” He waved his hands at me like he was trying to calm down a bear, but I’d destroyed his bed completely and shame was ravaging me from the inside out.

“I’m sorry,” I said again, this time not able to stop the tears that came out of me.

He raised his arms up and I flinched, waiting for the pain of the strike to hit me for this careless mistake. Instead, his hands cupped my shoulders, and I gasped out a stuttered breath when I opened my eyes to see him gazing at me with concern.

“It’s okay.” He reassured me again. “Do you need… things?” he asked and I nodded.

He pulled out his phone and his thumb moved at lightning speed before he pocketed it again.

“Do you want to take a bath? It might help you feel better.” he asked in a hushed tone like he was trying to be as gentle as possible.

I nodded again, clutching the soiled sheets to my body in shame.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered, and he pulled me into his embrace, kissing the top of my head.

“He really did a number on you, huh?” he asked.

Felix turned away my help when I offered to try to clean his bed, and instead he filled the tub for me with hot water. I sank down, feeling my back and stomach loosen from the burning pain that plagued me every month. The water eventually grew tepid, and my skin pruned.

Then there was a knock on the door.

“Reesa is here,” Felix said from the other side.

“W-why?” I asked.

“I’m here to help with your menstruation frustration,” she said in a cheerful tone and I groaned, dipping all the way down into the water to submerge myself before remembering it was probably now full of uterus blood.

She waited for me to finish and once I’d dried and wrapped myself with a towel, I opened the door for her to come in.

“What do you like? I can be the goddamn Willy Wonka of periods bitch,” she said, dropping a backpack onto the floor like it was a treasure chest.

“I don’t know what that means,” I told her honestly and she shot a big white smile at me.

“What do you use? Tampons? Pads? Cups?” she asked.

“No?” I said almost like a question, bringing my fingers to my lips and biting on my cuticles nervously.

I didn’t want to answer wrong.

“Well, if you used a cup you would know. That’s what I prefer, wanna try one out? I have a couple of unopened boxes. My mom bought a bunch on clearance before this name brand got bought out by the Nile.”

“A whole cup?” I exclaimed. “I don’t think that will fit up there.”

“It’s smaller than you think. But maybe we should try something easier first.” She laughed. “I’m usually not a fan of tampons, but these are organic. Let's start simple.”

She handed me a little green wrapped package and I looked at it dumbfounded.

“Er- Okay, here’s the box. I’ll give you some privacy but I’ll be right outside that door if you need me.”

I wanted to tell her to stop, to tell her to stay because I had no idea what I was supposed to do with this packet. I was overwhelmed and my stomach

was hurting worse than it had ever before in the past.

I sat on the toilet and took a deep breath, opening the green wrapper and becoming even more flustered trying to figure out how this was supposed to keep me from bleeding all over myself.

“I don’t understand it,” I shouted to Reesa.

“Extend it! You have to make it longer first.”

“Why?” I muttered out, not loud enough for her to hear. “Now what? What am I supposed to do with it?” I shouted and she giggled.

“There’s a diagram, open up the paper in the box.” I huffed out frustratedly but got out the paper.

The diagram did not ease my anxiety in any way.

“What if it gets lost inside of me?” I shrieked and she cackled out far too loudly for my comfort.

“It won’t.”

I was on my third attempt but every time I tried pushing it inside me it would get stuck and then just as I’d pull it out of me it would come out of the plastic applicator just fine. There was a graveyard of cotton mice surrounding me and I was starting to drip blood on the tile floor.

“I need help Reesa!” I begged with a frustrated cry.

“I’m sorry my friend, that’s a journey each menstruating person must face alone,” she said with a lamenting sigh.

“Like Bilbo?” I asked and she laughed.

“Yeah like fuckin’ Bilbo, but our dragon is our uterus.” She chuckled from outside the bathroom.

“No one showed you?” I asked her.

“I think my mom would have cut off her own hand before showing me.” She laughed. “Do you want to try a pad instead? Or maybe prop one leg up

on the toilet, sometimes that helps."

I took a deep breath and focused on the diagram again. Putting one foot on the toilet bowl and shoving the plastic tube inside of me. I grimaced at the odd feeling but it didn't hurt the way I had expected it to. I pushed the plastic and once I'd felt it click I pulled it out to my surprise to find that it was empty this time.

"I did it!" I screamed out in success.

I re-wrapped myself in the towel and came out of the bathroom screaming happily, Reesa hugged me like she was actually proud of my accomplishment. A strange kind of satisfaction I didn't know before.

"This is totally a win," she yelled.

"Thank fuck, that was getting weird," Corvin mumbled coming out of his room, scratching the side of his head without making eye contact.

"Blood is the essence of your life little boy. You can't handle the blood, you can't handle the puss," Reesa chimed out and he rolled his eyes at her while continuing to walk towards the living room.

"Thanks for your help, you can get the fuck out now." Sonny glared knives at Reesa, and she frowned at him.

"Um, excuse me? She's on her period, she should be with other menstruators, doing menstruating things. Not hanging around with you half-demon freaks." She crossed her arms over her chest like she wasn't afraid of Sonny.

"Like what?" Felix asked her.

"Um, like eating chocolate till she throws up, watching *The Notebook* until she has to drink a gallon of water to rehydrate. Masturbate till her cramps stop." She pressed her fingers to her lips like she was thinking of what else to add to her list.

“Well, that all sounds like things we can handle.” Felix began to push her out of the hallway like he was guiding her out of the chapel.

“You’re fuckin’ dicks, you know that? Don’t call me just to use me.” She pushed Felix’s hands off of her before walking the rest of the way to the door.

“Thank you Reesa,” Corvin called out from the fridge with a wave and cocky grin.

She looked over at me, her lips pressed to a flat line as if she was annoyed and I waved as well, a soft smile on my face that she returned with a giant grin of her own.

“So you’re all taking the day off because she got her period then?” she asked but no one answered. “Okay. Cool. Just checking.” She shut the door, taking an aura of annoyance with her.

“It’s Monday,” I gasped and they all shrugged, not seeming to care at all.

“I’m sorry about your bed,” I said to Felix again once I’d dressed.

Most of the clothes that they’d gotten for me were either dresses, tight, or full of holes but one thing they had in common was that they were all mostly black. I was starting to feel oddly comforted in the protective barrier they provided. I rummaged through the drawer where Felix had put my things into and eventually found a pair of pants that were comfortably loose and made of a soft fabric. I slipped on one of Felix’s t-shirts and made my way out to where the boys had already gathered.

“*The Notebook* or *Big Fish*?” Felix asked the minute I stepped into view.

“Those are words.” I agreed.

“They’re movies, take your pick. One is unrealistic in one way, and the other is improbable. But they’re both guaranteed to make you cry.” Felix shrugged.

“Do I have to cry?” I asked.

“The Gods demand your teary sacrifice. Didn’t you hear your friend?” Corvin said with a laugh that brought a smile to my own lips.

“Maybe the fish then,” I said with a shrug before sitting on the couch.

Sonny didn’t humor either choice but sat by my side throughout the entire movie. Though his eyes didn’t wander from the television, he looked less than interested in the story. I had never watched a movie like that in my entire life, and even though I had to stop to ask too many questions, I found that by the end I was crying, just as promised.

“I’m not sure I understand what happened.” I wiped a rogue tear from my eye.

“Or where the last two hours of my life went.” Sonny grumbled with crossed arms and I deflated.

“You didn’t have to watch it if you didn’t want to.” Corvin taunted him.

Sonny shot him a look that was sharper than knives, but Corvin just curled his lip up in a smile like he knew he had succeeded in getting under his nerves. Sonny huffed under his breath before getting off the couch and disappearing into the hallway.

“Don’t mind him, he’s worse than a Catholic about enjoying himself.” Corvin teased again, loud enough for Sonny to hear and slam his door shut.

“Why is he…?” I started a question I wasn’t sure how to end.

“The way he is?” Felix finished for me as if he understood how complex of a question I was asking.

Because Sonny Santorini wasn’t one way or another. He wasn’t anything and he was somehow everything all at once. Like a well carved mountain who proudly showed its scars because it knew they were trophies.

I nodded and Felix let out a deep exhale like he was gearing up for a story. Corvin put his hand on his brother’s chest as if to warn him.

“That’s not our story to tell, little lamb.” He shook his head and Felix shrugged at me.

“Why are you the way *you* are?” Felix asked, “We’re all just products of our environment, trying to break out of the molds we were meant to be shaped into. We’re just collections of contradictions created by parents who were just kids themselves.”

“I just want to figure you all out. Understand you.”

“But you do understand us, don’t you?” He pinched his eyebrows together in the middle.

“It’s strange that it can feel like I don’t know you at all, but then also feel like I’ve known you forever.” I shrugged, knowing that made no sense at all.

“It does feel like that.” He pulled me in by the hips, putting pressure where his thumbs touched my waist. “How are you feeling?”

“Same as always, but I’ve somehow talked to more people about my menstruation today than I have my entire life.” I put a finger to my lip as I thought about that.

“Is that a problem?” He pulled me closer.

My eyes traced down to where his hold on me loosened and his touch wandered adventurously up and down my side. I backed up uncomfortably,

my eyes darting over to Corvin who sat on the couch uninterested, watching something on the tv.

“What?”

“Um…” I looked away, feeling awkward and ashamed.

“Is this some Frollo bullshit? I’m not afraid of a little blood.” His hand cupped my behind and squeezed tightly.

“It’s…dirty.” I looked down, heat flushing my cheeks knowing he wouldn’t understand.

He barked out a laugh and I winced.

“Oh yeah. The thing about being unclean. I think it’s Leviticus right?” He lifted his hand into a fist and deepened his voice. “She sits down, unclean! If he sits there, unclean. Burn everything, it’s all unclean. Unclean!!!!!” he shouted upwards into the heavens and I giggled.

“Then somehow the magic of the night washes all of that away right?” Corvin added and I opened my mouth to answer but nothing came out, realizing how ridiculous the verses branded into my memory were.

“It’s not true. None of that shit is true. He filled your head with the lies he needed you to believe in order to keep you under his control. Fear kept you prisoner. Not that belltower, Mina.”

“Not much of a future had I left, right?” I asked and Felix pressed his lips into a flat line.

“I might have not found you.” He caressed my face with the side of his hand. “So maybe I’m selfish in thinking that this was all for the best.” I frowned, unsure how the last eighteen years could have been for the best but knowing the alternative would have been a life full of hardships.

One where I’d have no hope of ever meeting these men who I gravitated to so hopelessly.

OceanofPDF.com

It wasn’t an act.

Despite the only two people I trusted in this world having their own suspicions, I knew in my core Romina wasn’t the enemy here. She had just been caught in Frollo’s web. My mom had always said out of the two of us, I had the best intuition. I knew eventually Corvin would see it too. As for Sonny…

He had it bad.

The trick to it was not acknowledging it.

Cuz if he knew how obvious it was, he’d retreat completely.

I’d never seen Sonny Santorini so infatuated with anything in his entire life. He had two modes in his programming. Complete obsession, or absolute indifference. The fact he called her to his room at night let me know everything I needed to. He wasn’t the only one though.

I had it bad too.

Close my eyes, Romina. In the shower, Romina. In my dreams, Romina. It was starting to drive me insane to the point where I considered packing her in the car and driving away. Maybe stealing enough cash to buy some land and start a farm in Canada.

But I couldn't leave my brothers behind. None of us could.

"So… classes?" she asked again for the third time this week.

We weren't trying to keep her caged, but until we could figure out where she could go, she was safer with us.

"You're not going back to classes. Sonny should never have taken you. It was stupid and reckless of him." I failed at breaking it to her gently but she needed to understand that she was in danger out there.

"Reesa goes to class." She crossed her arms over her chest in a bratty way and I scratched my face to hide the amused smirk on my face.

Every day she revealed more of her personality, letting us know who she really was.

"Reesa is... She's taking a huge risk, it's her risk to take and I won't say anything else about that. It's not my job to keep her safe. You go out there and they'll eat you alive. The fact that they even know you exist now is a problem. They're constantly lurking around, jogging by the lake. No one came out here before. Am I wrong?"

She shook her head.

"Is it your job to keep me safe?" She asked.

"Yeah. I decided." I brushed my thumb over her lip and she smiled.

"I already had to shove my fist down Lincoln Rugsley's mouth after class." Santorini walked into the room with a dissatisfied look on his face.

"That's low profile." I rolled my eyes and his expression turned cold.

“W-why?” She straightened her shoulders like she had to summon the courage to ask.

“I didn’t like the way he was staring at you.” He narrowed his eyes at her, challenging her to ask more.

She took the bait like the sweet little thing she was.

“Why?”

“Maybe I don’t like other people looking at what’s mine.”

“I’m not yours,” she mumbled.

“Say it again, Pet. I dare you.” He cupped her chin in his hand.

“I’m not yours.” She held her breath, he was so close their noses touched.

“At least you’re getting better at lying. Now tell the truth.” He threw her chin back, almost forcing her to lose her balance.

She shook her head and bit her lips as if to keep herself from spilling her own secrets.

“You’re mine down to the very fabric of your being. What I decide to do with you is still up for debate.”

Her eyes widened, but not in anger or fear.

That same need for thrill I saw so vividly in my own twin’s eyes. That desire to feel something other than the dull ache of living.

“But if they already know I’m here, then aren’t I safer with you than by myself in the chapel?” She was smart, giving up the fight with Sonny and focusing on what she wanted instead.

She had a point and I could see on Santorini’s face he was about to concede. I’d nudge him in the right direction for her.

“Well, our schedules overlap pretty well, so for the most part aside from this one chunk between twelve and two, there will always be someone home.” I pointed out.

“Fine. She’ll come to class with me at twelve then.” Sonny decided and turned on his heel back into the depths of the hallway like a demon returning from his summoning.

“Congratulations little lamb, looks like you won one.” Corvin smirked.

“Why do you want to go back there so badly?” I asked her, not understanding why she was so desperate for a taste of his indoctrination.

“At first I wanted the opportunity to learn, just like everyone else. Now I just want him to stare into my face and try to pretend like I’m not scarred into his life like he is in mine.” It was a sliver of a girl I hadn’t seen yet, even if it was just a momentary flash of her.

“Is that wrong?” she asked when I didn’t respond.

“No pretty girl, it isn’t wrong at all.” I smoothed her hair and sat down, pulling her into my lap.

We’d put on another movie and she fell asleep about twenty minutes in. All I wanted was to lay there, entwined with her, breathing her scent into my soul and wearing it like a mark. But the others were waiting for me to start and I couldn’t guarantee how long she’d stay asleep. I pulled the blanket over her and made my way up the attic stairs, knowing I’d find my brothers up there.

They were already starting, boundaries drawn up around them and demonic sigils scribed on their chests with blood.

It was the Disordered’s symbol. A triangle with overlapping edges.

Digdin.

It was the only way to find clarity, to make certain we were on the right path.

I removed my shirt and tossed it aside on the attic floor, joining them in the center of the salt-lined circle. Corvin lit each candle one by one, making sure they were properly coated in the fine dust of ground up herbs.

Sonny approached me, dipping his fingers into the wooden bowl, coating them with what little blood remained before making the overlapping triangle on my chest. We clasped hands and began the work, calling with the dead language created from the depths of the abyss to invoke the ancient one and help us define our journey.

"*Norai Savac Arimalus, Dynosi chassis orecai.*" We repeated the chant in the dead language.

The bloody bowl filled with fire, scorching the remnants of Sonny's life essence and turning the flame from a bright flickering blue, into a black one. The sigil painted on my chest burned like a brand but I knew better than to focus on it. That's how you lost yourself to the chaos. We'd been doing this far too long; we knew the Devil took with the same hand he gave. It was a beautiful exchange of power, of surrender. The trick was pushing away the fear and remaining in control.

A clicking sound filled the air, like a metronome with no rhythm, setting off with no rhyme or reason. The hairs in my arm stood and Sonny's eyes turned dark all around, consuming the white of his sclera. He didn't blink. A comforting sense of dread and heaviness filled the room like a thick fog, blurring my vision, filling my head with pressure. Sonny opened his mouth to speak but another voice came out instead.

"Black," it hissed out like a serpent.

“What are you doing?” Her meek voice broke through from the stairwell.

My vision cleared with the next blink and Sonny’s eyes returned to a bright blue once again. The sigil on our chests had been smeared, as if someone wiped their hands over it to break the triangles open. Sonny breathed heavily through flared nostrils, closing his eyes and doing his best to diffuse the chaotic energy flowing through him.

“You shouldn’t be up here.” I walked over to her, cupping her cheek in my hand and directing her away from the ritual.

“Who’s blood is on you?” She asked and her eyes darted over to Santorini and the bandage on his arm gave him away.

She gasped and broke out of my hold, running over to him. He snarled and Corvin pulled her away from him, lifting her up in the air, back pressed to his chest while he carried her out of the attic. Her legs beat against him while she struggled in his hold, protesting and yelling Sonny’s name.

“You good?” I turned over to see Sonny doubled over, one knee on the ground while his hand supported him.

He nodded and waved me off, still breathing heavily as he attempted to rein in his composure.

“Better go answer your little girlfriend’s questions before she gets scared and runs off.”

I left him, unsure what it was I would even say, how I’d explain to her what it was she was seeing. I came down the stairs and stopped in the hall once I heard Corvin’s voice.

“It was a spell.” I heard Corvin say with ease.

I walked on and turned my head to see him between her legs while she sat on the kitchen island.

“Like magic?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“And what were you trying to do?” she asked him again.

“Just making sure we were on track. Sometimes destiny steers you off its course to see if you can get back by yourself.

“And if you don’t?” she asked. “If you don’t make it back to your destiny?”

“Then a new, shittier one is created for you,” he said and I noticed the way her eyebrows frowned.

“Don’t listen to him,” I told her, coming in from behind her.

“It’s believable,” she whispered. “I can’t imagine I would have been worse off had my mother not died.”

“Can’t dwell on the past, Mina,” I said into her ear before planting a kiss on her cheek.

“Sonny isn’t hurt?” she asked.

“You know nothing can hurt that asshole.” Corvin shook his head, and she hid a little half smile and dropped her chin down. “You’re not scared are you, lamb?” He asked, lifting her chin back up to his gaze with his fingers.

She shook her head a little too hard, blurring the line between exaggerating and convincing.

“I…I read your book,” she said, making Corvin’s eyebrows lift high up on his face.

“Which book?”

She jumped off the countertop and scampered away into the hallway, running back with the Satanic Shrine’s grimoire in hand. God of Lies.

“I took it, before I ever met you three,” she said looking down like she was ashamed of who she was before us.

“You read it?” I asked.

She nodded.

“And you understood it?” Corvin asked.

“Around the tenth time it stopped seeming like another language. Now it makes more.”

“And it didn’t scare you?” I asked again.

“Should I be scared?” Her face twisted in confusion.

“Someone rational would be.” Sonny startled us all from the dark of the hallway.

“Am I supposed to be rational?” she asked, raising the tattoo above his eye.

“The sky is supposed to be blue, the night is supposed to be dark…You Romina… You’re not *supposed* to be anything. You’re perfect as you are,” I whispered in her ears, low enough for only her to hear.

My fingers trailed the back of her neck, eliciting a shudder from her as I grazed the sensitive skin.

“Will you tell me about the binding ritual in the book?” she asked innocently and we all froze.

“No,” Sonny said to her and I exhaled a breath of relief when she didn’t fight him on it.

Binding rituals couldn’t be taken back. If you bound yourself to someone, or *someones*, it was forever. Cursed to spend a lifetime unable to part from the person you bound yourself to. It revealed the truest of loves or the truest of hates, depending on how you felt about the person you bound yourself to.

“Let’s go for a walk.” I suggested, redirecting from the disappointment of Sonny’s denial and seeing her eyes brighten once again.

She pranced off to her room to change her clothes and Corvin cocked an eyebrow at me, ready to pass judgment.

“What?” I asked and he shrugged, picking up a nearby glass.

“She’s getting too close to it all,” he said, taking a drink from it without looking back my way.

“I’d be concerned if Santorini felt the same way. He doesn’t.” I shrugged, watching Sonny grab a bottle of water from the fridge and retreating to his room to more than likely spend what was left of the day reading.

“Don’t you think that makes him even less reliable?”

“No, it makes me wonder why you’re fighting this so badly. You’ve spent just as much if not more time with her than either of us. I don’t believe you don’t see what I see.” I challenged, pointing out the obvious differences in our dynamic with Romina.

“Who says I’m fighting it? Maybe she just knows which one of us is the better twin.” He always did that shit.

Found a reason to get down about himself. Found a way to feel like he was less than.

“You’re a fucking idiot,” I told him right as she walked back into the room.

She was clad in black leggings, that damn holster always strapped to her thigh with the opal-handle blade gleaming from the side. She wore a loose black tank top with no bra on and her lips matched with a dark, glossy finish.

“If that’s how you look for a walk, I might need to consider getting you a big, scary fucking dog to stay at your side,” I told her and she laughed.

“She doesn’t need a dog, she has you,” Corvin said without much amusement and I grabbed her hand to usher her out of the chapel.

“Where are we going?” she asked, following close behind me.

“You tell me, you know this campus better than I do.” She took a moment to think before pointing back to an area behind the chapel.

“That way.” We began a leisurely stroll towards the back of our home. “I thought you had soccer practice today?”

“I’m losing interest. It’s expected.” I shrugged. “Everyone’s got something that keeps them going, some passion, or hobby, or something they enjoy that they look forward to. The reason for not blowing their brains out.”

“Like what?”

“Corvin has his knives, and.. well, Sonny has his insanity.” She elbowed me in the ribs playfully. “Okay, Sonny has *The Lord of the Rings*.” We both laughed.

“So what do you have?” she asked, eyes beaming brightly at me like she didn’t already know.

“I could never focus on one thing. It’s been that way my whole life. I just bounced around collecting hobbies, ideas, versions of me that I wanted to be in that moment. None of it ever lasted.”

“What are you collecting now?”

“You, I think. I’m consumed by just the thought of you.” She shook her head like she didn’t think she was worthy.

“So, soccer isn’t that for you anymore?”

“It never was. I wanted it to be.”

“Maybe not everyone has something…” She lamented, making me wonder if she felt the same hollowness inside herself that I did.

“Holy shit,” I said after we’d walked through the tall thicket of grass, nearly half a mile behind the chapel.

Rusty metal fencing lined a small area as if it had been made for a garden, but as we walked closer, I could see it for what it truly was. A cemetery. Nearly fifty headstones surfaced from the ground, the writing on them long worn down and gone.

“Wicked. I didn’t know this place was here.”

“It’s been here long before any of us. I doubt even Father Frollo knows about it. He keeps himself blind to everything around him that doesn't serve him a purpose,” she said.

“But you, the brave little thing you are, just so happened to roam one day till you found it?” I asked and she shook her head.

“No. It called to me,” she answered and I frowned, “Like the quiet was somehow louder than everything else until I got close enough to feel it. There’s a certain kind of buzzing in my head that goes away when I’m here.”

“That’s because the dead don’t speak unless you ask them to.” I pulled her into my chest.

She tilted her chin up to look at me, wrapping her arms around my waist.

“Sometimes the quiet scares me too though,” she whispered against my clothes.

“What about when you’re with us?” I hummed the question, backing her up until she was forced to sit on a tombstone.

It looked like it was made of white marble and it rose up from the ground. It was big enough to hold a body inside. A decapitated angel sat on the edge of it, at least without eyes it couldn’t judge us.

“It’s so loud I can’t think,” she whispered. “Like a million voices shouting over each other to try to get to me first.”

“What do they say?”

“Jump!” she mouthed, just barely audible.

“Then jump.” I raked my fingers through her hair and wrapped my lips around hers.

She pressed into me, clutched my t-shirt in her hands, and pulled me even closer.

“What if there’s no one to catch me?” she asked with a pained look on her face.

“If there’s no one to catch you, that would make me dead.” I gave her a serious look and she returned a half smile my way.

“If you’re dead then I might as well be too.”

“How romantic of you, pretty girl.” I breathed in her scent, something warm like vanilla but out here, mixed with all the wildflowers, it smelled even sweeter.

“W-what are you doing?” she asked nervously as I lifted my knee between her thighs, gently pressing against her center and running my hands up her sides.

“I want to mark this grave up with your blood, so that the next person who finds it thinks someone might have been killed here.” She sucked in a sharp breath, and I slid my hands up her legs, first unbuckling the holster and then grabbing at the waistband of her leggings. “Death on top of death,” I whispered.

I rolled them down her hips and she lifted off the marble for me to pull them past her thighs. There wasn’t going to be a lot of room to work here but I didn’t need it. I just needed my fingers. I pushed her down slowly, until her back was pressed flat against the stone.

She breathed heavily in anticipation.

I leaned over her, running my hand under her tank top and pinching her nipples between my fingers.

A mouse-like squeak of pleasure slipped from her lips.

With my other hand I reached between her legs and tugged on the string, her eyes widened in shock when I pulled the tampon out from inside of her. She tried to close her knees but I pressed against them, shaking my head.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, I told you.” I pressed my thumb against her clit and rubbed up and down. “I’m gonna turn this tomb into a crime scene.” I chuckled, leaning down to kiss her.

Her hips began to move against my hand, like she wanted to ask for more but couldn’t get it out so her body did the work for her instead.

“Mmm,” she whined, desperately reaching for me with her hands.

She pulled me down so that I was practically on top of her, and I dropped my knee on the stone bed for leverage. I hovered over her, dipping my fingers inside her overly wet, warm walls. I shuddered at the thought of how my cock would have felt in there, grunting to myself in disappointment before plunging my fingers deeper.

She dropped her head back, closing her eyes and relishing the moment.

I pulled my fingers out from inside her and pulled her head back up, forcing her to use her forearms to prop herself higher so she could see what I was doing to her.

“Does this seem dirty to you?” I asked, narrowing my eyes before letting her cheek go.

My bloody fingerprints stained the side of her face, she didn’t answer my question. She breathed heavily, glancing down at my blood-soaked fingers. I used the remaining slickness still coating my skin to press hard against her clit before thrusting back inside her.

“I want this pretty cunt dripping, Mina.” I told her, curling my digits and moving in and out of her.

She moaned loudly, uncaring that we were out in the open or if anyone would hear. Only the mighty dead were here, and they didn’t give a fuck what we did.

“Please, Felix. I need more. I need…” She didn’t know how to ask for it but I knew what she was asking for. I knew where she wanted to go with it. “I need you.”

“You have me, pretty girl.” I feigned ignorance, inserting another finger inside her and drawing a throaty moan from her.

She came around my fingers and her thighs clenched together and trembled. I kissed her, swallowing her screams until I pulled my fingers out from inside her. She propped herself back up again, her cheeks flushed with heat and embarrassment.

I smirked, popping both my fingers into my mouth and licking her blood off my skin. Her eyes widened again, this time in horror and I laughed. I looked down between her legs to see the mess we’d made and swiped my hands over her bloody pussy and then drew an inverted cross over the marble with it. She wrapped her lips over her teeth and bit down, like it would diffuse her shame.

“Come on,” I said, extending my hand out to her as she hopped off the grave and pulled her underwear and leggings up before scooping up her holster and knife from the gravestone.

“I don’t have a tampon anymore,” she hissed uncomfortably and I laughed.

I scooped her up and tossed her over my shoulder, her ass greeting the sunshine for the remainder of the walk. I figured if I defied gravity for her

she wouldn’t have to worry about leaving a trail of blood. Not that I was worried about it.

It was a privilege to wear her blood on me like a badge of honor.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I couldn’t get out of my own head. Every second of the day that I spent alone, I spent torturing myself, trying to find a reason for why my life had been this way. It didn’t hurt so bad when I was ignorant to it, when I didn’t know any better. But now that I had a taste of freedom, of what life was really like, all I could think about was why it happened this way for me. I loomed outside his bedroom door like a nervous shadow, waiting for an invite.

“What do you want, Romina?” he asked dryly as I walked inside.

“I need to talk to Frollo, *Carmine*.” I used the name I’d found written on most of his important documents.

“What did you fucking call me?” He hissed out, ignoring the first portion of my request while he closed in on me and forced me to back into the wall.

Sonny had this way about him and I always found myself cornered like an animal, always trapped with nowhere to go but to gnaw through the beast standing in my way. There was something about him that made me

want to raise my flags and go to battle, something inside me itched to fight when he came for me.

“That’s your real name, isn’t it?” I breathed out anxiously, his face was touching mine but his expression was too angry for me to feel anything but terrified, letting me know I might have crossed a line.

And not in a good way this time.

“Which one of those fucking assholes told you my name?” His forearm pressed against my throat, pushing me against the wall and cutting off my oxygen.

“Neither of them. I looked through your things and saw it.”

He raked his fingers through his hair like he was beyond his limit and his jaw ticked from the obvious rage that was running through his body.

“You’re not supposed to do that kind of shit.” He shook his head and I deflated, hiding my gaze from him once I noticed the gravity of his disappointment.

“I-I’m sorry,” I said in a quiet voice and he exhaled heavily, removing his forearm from my neck.

“You didn’t fucking know.” He brushed his hair out of his eyes but his nostrils were still flared from his anger.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered again.

“Just don’t call me that, do you hear me?” He wrapped his fingers around my throat, still keeping me pinned to the wall and waiting for my understanding.

“Yes. *Sir,*” I wheezed out with the same tone I took with Father Frollo when he refused to see anything but his way.

Sonny was nothing like Frollo, but in moments like this, where he refused to tell me anything real and it was expected of me to blindly

comply, I couldn't help but feel the bitter sting of their similarities, even if they were small. He let out a quiet laugh under his breath before removing his arm from my neck.

"Look at that, I think I might like that nickname." He grabbed my hand and wrapped it over his erection, thick and engorged, under the fabric of his pants.

He let me go and turned on his heels, walking away from me.

"Will you tell me about the binding?" I asked again, hoping he'd give me something if I bothered him enough.

"No," he said, narrowing his eyes my way.

"Why not?"

"You want to bind yourself to three agents of hell, Romina? Do you want to get on your knees every day and let me use you until there's nothing left of you?" he asked and I shrank. "You're not ready to be bound to me," he said as he stepped out into the hallway, walking out of his room.

It stung nearly as much as the headmaster's hand on my face.

"Is that because you don't like me?" I asked, my voice shaking while I internally cursed myself a million times over for asking it again.

He didn't turn back to face me, but he froze for a split second.

At the same time, Corvin walked out of his own room and I buried my face in my hands to hide my embarrassment and fight back the tears. All I seemed to get from Sonny was rejection lately, and for some reason it made me even more desperate for him.

I pulled my phone out and texted Reesa.

**ME:** How do I make someone 'want it'?

**REESA:** context please weirdo

**ME:** How do I get them to have sex with me?

**REESA:** I'll come over later. I have more books.

I heard a knock at Sonny's door and looked up from my phone. The door was wide open, but Corvin stood there, leaning his forearm against the threshold.

"Wanna go somewhere?" he asked and I nodded my head, wiping the stray tears I didn't realize had fallen down my cheeks.

He draped an arm over my shoulder and called back into the hallway as he walked me out into the living room.

"We're leaving."

Felix came rushing out of his room pulling his soccer kit over his head and nearly sliding over the waxed floor with his socks.

"Where the fuck do you think you're going?" he asked, a V forming between his eyebrows.

"Nowhere that requires a car, a chaperone, or your bullshit," Corvin shouted back without so much as turning to face his brother.

I smirked at Felix and waived while Corvin practically pulled me out of the house.

"He treats you like a child." I looked up at him once we'd gotten outside.

"You can tell?" he said without looking back my way.

"I spent my whole life being treated like one." I shrugged and he pulled me closer to his side.

"He means well. They both do. I might act like I hate it, and hell knows I fucking do, but the reality is, this is how they show they care."

"Funny. That's what Frollo used to say too."

"I'm sorry." He looked straight into my eyes when he said it.

That’s when I noticed how truly dark they were. Like an obsidian mirror that sucked you in and forced you to reflect on your own soul. There was a multitude of inner workings I couldn’t begin to figure out for myself yet.

All of that in just his gaze.

He didn’t fight me on it or disagree, he just let my feelings be out there, recognized and heard.

And that felt better than I realized it could.

We walked to the parking lot side by side, his arm still draped over me in a way that felt heavy and yet somehow comforting all at once. As if his weight was armor, covering me and preparing me to face the world I still knew nothing about.

“I thought you told Felix we weren’t taking a car?” I asked, confused as he fumbled keys in his hands.

“I don’t lie to my brother, Romi. That would be wrong.” He winked and pressed a button on his key.

An alarm sounded off in the distance and he smirked before dropping his arm and pulling me by the hand behind him. The source of the noise was a motorcycle, but not anything I was prepared to encounter.

It was a beautiful, shiny black, and it was full of neat edges and geometrical forms. It left me breathless. I reached out to touch it, realizing I wanted to rub my hand all over its smooth, reflective surface. I wanted to press my face to the chrome and feel it against my skin.

“Why do I want to say it’s sexy?” I asked him and he laughed.

“Because she’s a Ducati, and if you called her anything less, we’d have a problem. This is my best girl.” His nickname for the bike somehow left a bruise in my chest. “So you better treat her good.”

“Will you take your medicine?” I asked, immediately wincing while I waited for an angry response or outburst.

“Yes,” he said, almost too easily.

He pulled out a pill from his pocket like he was used to carrying one on him at all times now and he swallowed it dry with a dramatic bob of his Adam’s apple. He helped me straddle the bike, taking a helmet off of the handlebars and securing it over my head before taking a seat in front of me.

“Wrap your arms around me, you’re gonna wanna hold on, little lamb.”

I did as he said, and suddenly the bike rumbled under me, sending vibrations directly to my heart.

“It’s like the bell,” I shouted over the noise, hoping he could hear me.

“Oh, it’s nothing like it. Hang on okay?” he said, and suddenly the bike jerked forward too suddenly, forcing a scream from my mouth.

He was right.

*This* was true freedom.

I fought the urge to scream the entire time we rode, but my chest craved the release like nothing else. A smile covered my face from ear to ear and I was glad he was faced the other way so he wouldn’t tease me for it. The vibration of the engine right below me called to something deep inside me, like it was trying to wake me up, remind me of who I was supposed to be.

Because that’s how it felt with them.

Like it was always supposed to be this way, but I’d somehow forgotten.

In that bell tower I spent every day feeling like I was waiting for something. Waiting for my life to start, waiting for someone to hand me my story. With them, I was being handed the pen and being told to write it. With them I wasn’t waiting anymore, I was living.

It seemed like the only place that existed outside of the school was the Court of Miracles and what I'd learned to be the 'cover' for it that existed above ground. We'd driven through the city and Corvin had shown me that all of the neighborhoods and all of the houses had been vacated for years.

Most everyone had been moved to the poorhouses that had been restructured to house the workers. I didn't understand how people could live this way, why no one tried to stand up and fight for more.

"Did you stand up and fight for more?" Corvin asked me, and I looked down to hide my embarrassment. He pulled my chin up and shook his head at me. "When someone has power over others, they will keep those beneath them in a position where they cannot do anything but be grateful with what they have. Those who speak out, those who fight? In the end they have the most to lose. Would you speak out if it cost you your child's meal for the day? Would you risk that?"

"How does it end?" I asked him, the tears welling up in my eyes and his expression softer than I'd ever seen, softer than I'd expected him to be capable of.

"It doesn't, not unless *we* fight for it," he said.

"I thought you said those who fight have the most to lose?" I didn't bother to hide my confusion.

"I have nothing to lose, I've already lost it all. So I'll fight for them so that they don't have to." He sounded like a noble knight from a fairytale.

But the reality was, he was a tattooed heathen with at least five knives on his person this very moment, and there was a good chance some of them were stained bloody. Somehow he scared me less than the thought of Father Frollo catching me with the smile that had been plastered on my face that entire ride.

“That’s not true though, is it?” I asked, and he tilted his head curiously.

“You have Felix, and you have Sonny,” I said. “They’d be upset if they lost you.”

“Some things are worth fighting for, regardless of what you lose in the process. My mother taught me that. Anyway little lamb, I just mean that, people like me, people who are in a position to be able to do more, who would suffer less consequences, who have more resources. It should be up to us to shield those who don’t have the same privileges. Even if it feels hard, even if the stakes are high.” He really sounded like some sort of hero, and I wanted to push him further, to ask what made him this way.

“So you’ll shield me?” I asked instead.

“Haven’t I been?” He punched my shoulder softly and I laughed.

“I think you’ve been teaching me to use a knife.”

“Why need a shield, when you can be a blade instead?” He challenged me with a cocky look.

I found I had no counterpoints to his argument.

“Do you like me?” I asked him and he gave me a look that was entirely too sarcastic.

Unlike Felix, Corvin was impossible to read.

“I like you just fine little lamb, why do you ask?” He raised both eyebrows while he waited for his answer, but I just shrugged a response.

“No reason.” I tucked my insecurities in my back pocket, content with the validation.

We found our way inside the underground tunnels faster this time around, and I realized that maybe he was right, maybe Reesa did talk a little too much. But she was kind, and it wasn’t something I was used to, so I was happy to keep her around, in small doses.

“Rule number one.” He started off without looking down at me, arm draped over my shoulder once again as we walked through the massive underground chamber.

It was insane to think that any time of the day this was a functioning, operating, place filled with people who knew and held secrets beyond my comprehension. It made me realize Corvin was right. These people had so much to lose, but they still risked it all to fight for a way of life that was important to them.

I was realizing that the church didn’t leave room for anything else. It didn’t give people room, space, freedom, or time to be anything else but… devoted. Devoted to a God who wouldn’t even spare them a second chance. These days, my thoughts alone would be enough doubt to condemn me to hell.

“Don’t wander. Don’t stray too far. And stay in my sight.”

“Those sound like three rules, and somehow they sound like the same rule,” I told him with a side eye.

“Good, then you don’t need me to tell you rules two, three, or four.” He said with a grin.

“Oh yeah? What would those be?” I nudged his side with my elbow and he messed up my hair under his large hand.

“The ass-kicking I’d give you if you didn’t listen.” He tugged me by the hand again, ignoring the dozens of people on the makeshift, cobblestone-street.

It was massive. It was hard to believe we were so deep underground that a place like this could house a building so large. It was nearly 30 feet tall, gigantesque, and covered in architecture reminiscent of the same cathedral the archbishop hid himself away in.

“Maybe close your eyes,” he said with a mischievous smile and I raised an eyebrow suspiciously. “It’ll be better that way, don’t make me blindfold you.” He pulled me up the steps and guided me inside.

I clenched his forearm tightly while he led me in, breathing nervously at the anxious thought of what would be waiting inside.

“Can I open?” I whispered.

“Just one more second.” He pulled me in a few more steps. “Okay,” he whisper-yelled and I let my eyelids flutter up.

“What?” I couldn’t hide the marvel in my voice.

There were hundreds, no thousands, maybe even millions of books in here. Every inch of every wall was covered from floor to ceiling with books. There were tight isles made of bookshelves everywhere you had room to turn. It was a dream.

A place like this couldn’t exist, because it meant that all of these books were real.

“I told you that the campus library was shit.” He took in the look on my face and added it to one of his wins. “And here, no one controls what you read.” He fanned his arm out like he was showing off the place in its entirety.

It was a wonder to behold in its magnanimous entirety.

“How does it work?” I asked him.

“Just pick out whatever you want. As many as you want. Just don’t stray too far okay?” I nodded and skipped away with a squeal, looking through the categories hanging from signs on the ceilings.

I had enough of non-fiction. Had enough of the false histories recreated by men who only cared to dilute the truth. I wanted to dive headfirst into worlds of fantasies, stories of the unknown, the magical, and the brave.

I wanted to live through their stories so that I could forget about my own. Read their pain, pick at their wounds to relieve the itching that came with mine. I’d lost track of time when I’d wandered into a dark little corner and found myself reading a paperback about a toxic spill in a small town.

“Romance?” Corvin’s husky voice whispered in my ear from behind, goosebumps prickling along the back of my neck and my arms from feeling the heat of his body behind me.

I could smell the leather of the jacket he wore mixing with the scent of old tobacco from his cologne.

“I want to get lost in someone’s happiness.” I turned my neck slightly to look back at him, his head towering over me as he looked down into my eyes.

“Little lamb, love won’t make you happy.” He dropped both his arms over me, lacing his hands together and using it to bring me in even closer to him. “Love scars. Love leaves you half the person you were before and twice as eager to take your life when it’s all over.”

“Does it have to end?” I breathed out a shaky breath, feeling the weight of his hands still pulling tightly against my heart.

“Everything ends, Romi. The sun guarantees it.” I frowned and looked back down, eyeing the pile of books in my arm and then glancing over at

the second pile stacked at a nearby table.

“I’m ready,” I told him, breaking out of his hold and walking towards the rest of my chosen books.

“You don’t have to stock up for the year, I can bring you back next week.” He chuckled, and my eyes widened at his offer.

“I’ll be ready for more then.” I smiled and pushed the first pile towards him and he looked at me with a face full of shock.

“You’ll read all these books in a week? You’re just like Santorini.” He made the comparison and my smile faded.

He noticed, shook his head and nodded towards the older lady standing behind a counter. She seemed to know Corvin, making small talk and asking about Felix. Actually, it seemed like everywhere we went, people knew Corvin.

He gave her some money and told her we’d be back next week and she clasped his tattooed hands inside her wrinkled, spotted ones.

“You’re a good boy Corvy.” Her hands trembled a bit before she let him go and we walked out of the massive building.

“How do you know so many people?” I asked him.

“I don’t know that many people. They know me though.” He scratched the back of his head while we walked down the steps. “My mom was well known. People respected her, they still do. Up there not so much, but down here, they know the truth.” His face turned sad, and my heart pinched inside of me.

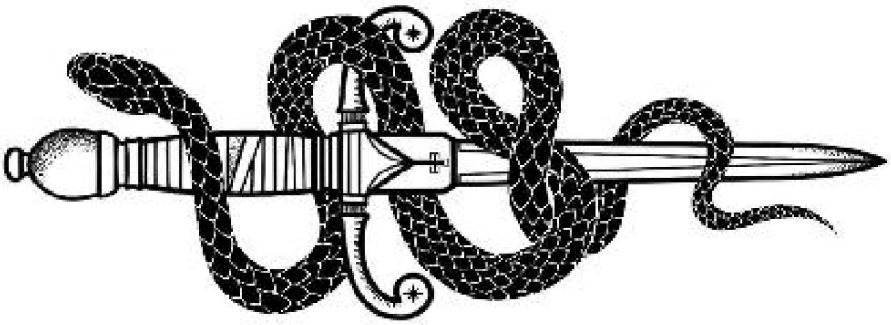
“Because of Frollo’s lies?” I asked, he nodded.

“What do you want to do now little lamb?” He pulled out his phone to check the time, “We still have some time before Sonny’s class ends and he notices we took the Ducati out.”

“Will he be very upset?” I wondered out loud, knowing the answer.

Corvin shook his head. “So we better make it worth it, don’t you think?” He pointed to the ice cream shop.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

I was losing my hold on what mattered.

Deflecting Arlan’s calls nearly every single day and pretending like there would be no consequences to it. Jerking off angrily in the shower over a girl who should have been nothing but a bump on my path to claiming what was mine. Now I’d found this bump was becoming a hill, and somehow hills always turned into fucking mountains, didn’t they?

It was bad enough that Corvin was lying to us now, and putting himself and her in danger out there. He’d been down at the Court of Miracles a whole two minutes before Dera texted me to let me know but I’d been too tied up in class to leave. I was waiting on Felix to get back from his class and I paced back and forth in front of the pew, wondering if I should just leave him behind and go collect them both on my own.

There was a weak knock out front, and I could see the annoying friend lurking around through the stained glass that decorated the front door.

“What?” I opened the door a mere three inches and waited for her to answer.

“I brought some books for Mina.” She patted the tote bag that hung from her arm.

“Don’t call her that.” I warned her. She wedged herself in the opening and somehow pushed past me into the chapel.

“What? Sonny Santorini is too good for nicknames?” She mocked me and I narrowed my eyes at her, wondering how dumb she really was.

“Obviously not.” I didn’t hide my annoyance.

“WAIT! Your name isn’t Sonny?” She looked so shocked that I had to fight the urge to not tear into her ignorance.

She was Romina’s friend.

I’d be tolerant.

“You think that my parents named their only child, Sonny?” I asked her and she choked out a laugh.

“Well what’s your real name then?” She asked but I ignored her, waiting for her to reveal the real reason she was here. “Somehow it makes you less badass knowing it’s *not* your real name and you just let people call you that.”

“Stop talking, Reesa.”

“Well, I just came by to drop some books off for Romina, is she around?” She extended her neck to get a better look further into the house, as If I was somehow hiding the girl from her.

“She is not,” I answered.

“Well, can I leave these in her room?” She started to walk further into the house, but I grabbed her arm to bring her to a stop.

“She doesn’t have a room. You can leave them with me, I’ll make sure she gets them.” I told her, but she frowned at me.

“She doesn’t have her own room? Every time I think you guys can’t get more fucked you top yourselves. Do you have her clean and cook for you as well? Does she carry your books to class?” She crossed her arms over her chest like we were some kind of monsters.

Well, maybe we were.

Just not that kind.

“Listen here, aside from the weird little toilet situation she had going on up in that bell tower, that we’re not even going to *talk* about. I’m pretty sure Romina’s never cleaned a goddamned thing in her life.”

She swallowed a hard gulp as I loomed over her threateningly.

“What do you mean by toilet situation?” She asked nervously, it wasn’t my place or my trauma to reveal.

“Maybe it looks to you like we’re somehow the bad guys here, but let me remind you of the monster who kept her locked up there for nearly two decades.” My upper lip peeled up involuntarily. “Get out Reesa, I’ll tell her you came by when I find her.”

I pulled the door open and extended my hand for the bag of books. She looked unsure but handed it off to me anyway before walking out of the chapel. I took to my bedroom and tossed the tote bag onto the bed, raking my fingers over my face while I tried to decide what to do.

I didn’t enjoy clipping his wings, but I couldn’t let him go on doing something that might mean leaving Felix all alone in this world. I was an only child, and yet somehow I’d spent my entire life worrying about those fucking two.

They came in before Felix got back. All smiles and laughing like they were the best of friends and not two idiots making terrible decisions, encouraging each other to be the worst versions of themselves. Their laughter cut short the minute their eyes met mine.

“What were you thinking?” I asked, waiting to see who would answer first.

“That I’m an adult who enjoys making decisions for myself. What about you Romina? Are you an adult who enjoys making decisions for yourself?” He egged me on, looking at her and she shrunk back.

Her eyes darted back and forth between the two of us like she didn’t know what the right answer would be. There was a good chance there weren’t any right answers here.

“Don’t set her up. Why are you acting so self-destructive? You’re better than this.” I attempted to tone down my rage.

“Wanting to be in control of my life is self-destructive? That’s rich, coming from *you*.” He snarked. “We’re fine, nothing happened. Aren’t we fine, Romina?” He gritted out and she nodded her head like a cartoon character, overly dramatic and too eager to come to his defense.

“Because you’re lucky. How am I supposed to trust you if you’re always making risky decisions, not taking your meds or thinking about the consequences?” I raised my voice, feeling that overprotective urge to knock him out just to keep him safe.

“He took his medicine,” she mumbled quietly, but loud enough for me to hear.

“What?” I said looking at her first, then to him.

He rolled his eyes and dropped the bag he was carrying on the floor before tucking both hands into his pockets and walking away from me and

through the hallway.

“You got him to take his medicine?” I asked her with my eyes narrowed and fully fixed on her. She didn’t look away and I wasn’t sure if it was because she knew it pleased me or if she was doing it to irritate me, like a challenge.

Both options made me harder than hell.

“Yes.” A fraction of a smile curled on just one side of her lip as if she’d learned how to mirror me too well.

My cock was practically throbbing.

“Hmm. Go wait for me in my bedroom.” I directed her and strode away, not an ounce of fear coming from her.

“Did you not plan on telling me you took your meds?” I asked, standing at the threshold of his bedroom.

“You’re just so sexy when you’re pissed off, Santorini. How can I resist?” He grinned, lacing his fingers behind his head and leaning back.

“You’re a shitty little cunt, you know that?” I pushed away from his room, ignoring the sounds of his laughter and bracing myself for the torment of the silver haired siren who suffocated all of my thoughts lately.

“You both treat him like children.” She said, always far too courageous when she spent time with Corvin.

“We keep him *safe*. We keep *you* safe. Which is less than what I can say that both of you are capable of doing for each other.” My upper lip peeled up at the idea of them both going off on their own and what an impulsive mess they’d become.

“Your idea of safe is my idea of trapped.” She crossed her arms over her chest defiantly.

“That’s because you haven’t gotten a good look at all the monsters out there, Pet. If you think Frollo is as bad as it gets, you’re dead wrong.” But she lifted her chin up in challenge.

“Maybe I’d like to find out for myself.” She stood her ground. “Why do you care if I’m safe?” she added.

“Why do you insist on pushing my buttons?” I questioned her, not fully sure if I liked this newfound sense of bravery that Corvin had so clearly been cultivating inside of her.

“Why don’t you answer my question?” she asked, lifting her chin up at me like she wasn’t backing down.

“What question?” I knew which question she had been referring to, the one that loomed over the both of us like a curse from the fates we couldn’t avoid.

But I wanted to hear her say it again, so I could shatter her a little more, push her away because it was the only thing I knew how to do well. I wanted to break that need in her, that part of her that was so desperate for approval.

She didn’t need it.

“Why won’t you tell me if you like me?”

I pulled my shirt over my head and tossed it on the ground, her eyes immediately scanned over me, lingering over the bits she liked before she glanced at the scarring wound on my chest she caused. She stood from the bed like she was trying to take charge of the situation. I stepped in close to her to remind her that she wasn’t.

Maybe with Felix, maybe even with Corvin.

But not with me.

“Answer me.” Her voice wavered, her anger making her the wrong kind of emotional, and she pulled the black opal blade out and pointed it threateningly.

“Corvin teaching you to use that, Pet?” I asked, lifting an eyebrow up.

“Y-yes,” she stammered out, her hand nowhere near as shaky as her voice.

“Then he must have told you the number one rule. You don’t threaten someone with a weapon, unless you mean to use it.” I stepped closer and she slashed against my chest again, crossing the previous wound and creating an X on the space over my heart.

I didn’t miss the fucking nuance of it all.

I ripped the knife out of her grip forcing a gasp from her before I put it to her own neck.

“Shall I make you bleed for me the way you’ve done to me twice now, Romina?” I glared, waiting for her answer.

“Haven’t you already?” I could still taste her virginity on my lips.

“Not nearly enough.” I breathed out, pulling her in by the back of her head and closing my lips around hers.

She pushed against my chest for a few seconds, but her lips didn’t deny me. Opening up and allowing my tongue to slip in and collide with hers. I could still taste the sweet flavor of the mango ice cream on her tongue and she moaned back before scratching at the fresh cut with her sharp nails.

I shoved her down onto the bed and she landed with a bounce, using her elbows to support her. She was wearing a black dress with a short mesh skirt and a red leather corset. It pushed her tits up so high that from this angle they looked like they could suffocate her.

“You said I was messed up, that I liked to hurt you. Isn’t that right?” I asked and she swallowed hard.

“Yes.” She breathed out as I loomed over her, tracing over her soft skin with the sharp point of the knife, not hard enough to cut but enough pressure to leave a red mark.

“What about you, Romina. Do you like to hurt?” I pressed the blade to her neck again, forcing her to lift up her chin to look at me.

“I do.”

I ran the blade through the corset, cutting the ribbon that brought it together in the front, not stopping at the skirt. The fabric split in half and I palmed my hands over her soft skin, relishing the feeling of her warmth against my cold touch.

“Are you already wet for me?” I whispered in her ear before rubbing the smooth opal handle of the dagger against the bundle of nerves in her center.

“Ah, yes,” she moaned out seductively.

“Are you wet for me, or are you wet for Corvin?” I asked and her eyes jarred open at my question.

“I don’t know,” she answered truthfully like the good girl she was.

I continued to rub up and down against her clit, she threw her head back in an appreciative manner while I continued to work her up with one hand on the knife and the other touching every inch of her exposed skin. I ran my tongue along the red lines I’d scratched into her with the pointed part of the blade and she let out a breathy gasp.

“Why are you so desperate to be liked by the men who your very father deems evil?” I asked her, slowly pushing the handle of the knife inside her and forcing a pleasureful groan from deep inside her chest.

“He’s not my father.” She protested with another moan once I thrusted deeper and harder, having to hold the sharp end of the knife in my hand in order to go as far inside her as I wanted it to.

She squirmed against the handle, moving her hips like she was desperate for more. I moved faster, squeezing the blade tightly enough to know that there would soon be blood dripping from my hand onto her. She gasped with every thrust, clawing at the sheets and begging for release.

“Is it because you’re a dirty little slut?” I asked and her face twisted up.

“No!” She shook her head.

She pushed her hands against me like she was trying to shove me off of her but I pinned her down with one hand and fucked her with the handle of the blade as hard as I could. I ignored the burn in my palm, watching droplets of my blood coating her pretty cunt while she moaned and screamed.

“Only someone as fucked up as you would enjoy this Romina,” I told her, dipping my head down to lick me off of her.

“No-No! No! Stop!” She begged.

“Do you like this because you’re a dirty little whore?” I spat out, my hand burning against the sharp steel cutting into my flesh.

She came hard, writhing against the handle and eyes rolling to the back of her head while her mouth let out feral sobs. Blood pooled around my grip and smeared down the inside of her thighs.

“Answer me!” I screamed.

“Safeword! Safeword!” She cried between breaths and I lifted off of her, pulling the handle out.

“What’s wrong? What do you need?” I backed away, giving her the space I thought she might want.

I threw the knife on the mattress next to her, the silver portion glistening with my blood. She picked it up to inspect it, eyeing the blade first and then my hand. The tears ran freely down her face, like she had no control over whether they spilled or not. She took a stuttered inhale before trying to speak.

“I’m not those things. I’m not dirty!” She dropped her head into her hands and began to sob a sound almost too painful for me to ignore.

“No, you aren’t.” I reassured her, taking a step closer. “Can I touch you?”

She shook her head, still too wounded from my words. It should have stung, but my heart had turned to stone too long ago. She didn’t want me and I didn’t know how to make it better. I only knew how to make it worse.

So I did just that.

“Do you want the answer to your question?” I asked and she nodded meekly.

“No Romina, I don’t like you.” I spoke my truth too dryly.

“Oh.” She looked down, her confidence dissolving and her embarrassment evident.

She looked unsure of herself, but she didn’t dare make eye contact again. She picked up the scraps of her clothing before she darted out of my room, practically naked.

I was glad she left.

The puppy dog eyes didn’t work on me, but had she stayed another moment I would have been forced to tell her that I didn’t like her, because like was an emotion for children on the playground.

I liked a good cup of coffee. I liked dark and stormy nights. I liked watching Frodo get stabbed by the Nazgûl Lord with the Morgul-knife on

Weathertop. Fuck, I even liked it when she called me sir, even if it was to antagonize me.

But this girl?

That couldn’t be reduced to such a fickle fucking word.

I was addicted to her. Mesmerized. I was dead fucking obsessed and I knew I was undeniably fucked when it came to her.

But I wasn’t brave enough to let her know that.

Because I wasn’t strong enough to keep her once this all blew up.

And it would blow up. It was just a matter of time.

*OceanofPDF.com*

Falling into a rhythm with the men who had broken into my life felt a lot easier than any previous moment that had once been ruled by Father Frollo. Felix was a dream my heart conjured up long ago when I'd been in search of a knight, it was hard to believe he was real, that something so good could last.

Corvin was the easiest to talk to. He was always eager to discover what kind of thoughts were in my head and he shared equal parts of himself without holding back. He was determined to make me strong, so that no one else could break me again.

Sonny was…

Sonny was all four horsemen sent to bring me to submission in their hellish crusade. Except I found I was rather fond of being on my knees and it wasn't for reverence. But Sonny was filled with complexities I didn't understand, and I discovered that the wall he'd built up was one I couldn't break through on my own.

It had been a little over a month since they'd found me and we'd gone on living this way, without any of us really questioning what it meant. An impending sense of doom was constantly crushing my heart flat. I thought Frollo would come in here and tear it all down. I was paralyzed by the thought of him taking me away from them. I was starting to believe my fears were the reason the dreams were happening nearly every night now. The drowning, the snake, the crucifix. But I couldn't make sense of it all.

With the Escuras, I learned where the root of contempt came from. Felix told me their history with the church and how Corvin's condition began soon after Frollo murdered their mother. At first I didn't believe them, that the man who'd raised me and kept me alive all these years could do something so horrendous.

But as time passed and weeks of sharing our lives together went by, I'd come to find that maybe they weren't the monsters Frollo had painted them to be. That maybe I'd been the fool all along.

A science experiment.

A toy for his amusement.

Whatever his reasons for keeping me all this time, there was nothing genuine or decent in his motives. That much I knew. But it gnawed something terrible inside of me not understanding why I'd lived the way I'd lived for so long.

I almost always slept in Felix's bed. All three had agreed together, without me, that Corvin couldn't be trusted to not hurt me. It was rare any time we spent together went unchaperoned, whether it was with one of the boys or Reesa hanging around.

Sonny called me to him nearly every night until he'd finished reading me the Hobbit. I didn't have the heart to tell him I had finished it myself close

to two weeks prior on my own. Like an addict, I went back to him regardless of how much it hurt. Maybe it was because he looked like he was in just as much pain and somehow that comforted me. Maybe it was because I'd found *The Lord of The Rings* even more interesting than the first book.

Corvin had told me to make Sonny want *it*, whatever *it* was. I had a feeling I was doing the exact opposite. Slowly locking myself down inside with the same feelings of shame and inadequacy the archbishop had so kindly bestowed upon me. All because I was fixated on a sentence Reesa had once planted into my head. Every night, when we finished, I promptly left the room and he didn't argue, didn't bother using whatever magic he could to force me back to him.

He always let me go.

And it hurt sharply because I just wanted so badly for him to ask me to stay. Nothing compared to sleeping in the safety of his arms, but he'd decided I wasn't worthy of it any longer. He wouldn't ask me to stay, or maybe he couldn't.

Maybe those weren't words Sonny Santorini was capable of unleashing into the world. I'd learned enough around these men the last few weeks, enough to know that magic existed everywhere and that words were spells. Once casted out of our mouth they could conjure all sorts of hell or blessings into the world.

As for the universe?

There was no karma.

I knew firsthand of that.

Because if karma existed it had long forgotten to check Claüde Frollo's transgressions for equal distribution. There was no equivalent exchange

here. He kept his prayers loud but when he confessed, he left it short. No, karma or any force like it, was long gone from this planet. We had to create our own destiny. Forge it with our very hands and defend it with our mouths as if our tongues were weapons against deceit.

I'd never known the truth.

Maybe that's what I'd been missing this whole time.

"Breathe," Sonny demanded from behind me, barely giving me time to comply before shoving something slick and cold inside of me and stretching my walls to the brim.

I gasped. Clenching the sheets under my fists and turning my head to the side to look back at him so I could try to figure out what he'd just put inside of me.

It was usually colorful toys but this didn't feel like anything we'd played with before. I heard the bottle of lube, and he squeezed out the liquid and dripped it onto my butt. I bit my lip in anticipation, knowing what was about to happen and bracing myself for it. I'd snagged a dirty book from Reesa, about some mythical creatures, that was three hundred pages of mostly sex. After my fifth time reading it in a day, I embarked on a personal mission to earn the same amount of pleasure for myself.

Sonny inserted a slickened finger into my puckered hole, pushing through slowly before working it in and out. I moaned into the sheets, hearing his chuckles of contentment with himself while he moved the object in and out at the same pace his finger pleasured my puckered star.

"I want to hear you, Romina."

"Oh God!" I moaned out as he picked up his speed and rammed the object deeper inside of me. "I'm gonna come Sonny."

He inserted a second lubed up finger and worked it in and out of my tightest hole, pushing down so that I could practically feel his fingers through the thin skin that separated it from whatever else was inside my pussy.

“Can you feel that?” He asked and I nodded, purposefully antagonizing him without my words so that he would do it harder.

He slammed it into me, stars kaleidoscoping through my eyelids as I came in rapid tremors, my body quaking with his fingers still inside of me. He didn’t stop until the last aftershock subsided, before pulling everything out slowly before heading for the bathroom. I stayed there, legs jello, and spine turned to yarn as I breathed deeply and got my bearings back.

My mind was working rapid fire, like it almost always did. Sonny was confusing, he was the kind of unknown I imagined staring into a black hole would feel like. Too big, too terrifying, and all destroying. We’d never quite repaired the seam I tore into the fabric of our relationship but we kept going on as if nothing happened, as long I didn’t try to pry into his feelings again. As if he could already read me better than myself, he shook his hands off, walking back in from the bathroom, the tattoo above his eye already raised in question.

“What's on your mind?” he asked, taking a bite out of the very same cucumber I could now tell so clearly was just inside of me.

It looked smaller than it felt.

Which only made me think how much bigger he’d feel inside of me.

“Well, it’s just that. When you do things to me, it’s always with your hands or something else.” I said, eyeing the cucumber and he pointed it to me in offering as if I was suggesting I wanted a bite.

I shook my head, looking down in embarrassment, not able to believe the words are actually coming out of my mouth.

Who was I becoming because of them?

“You’re wondering why I haven’t stuffed my big, giant cock inside your tight little pussy yet.” He didn’t ask, he’d already read my mind. I bit my lip, trying to fight the heat that was scorching in my cheeks and he chuckled.

“Has Felix fucked you yet?” he asked and I shook my head.

“Come back to me when he does.” He said, and I frowned at his words, not sure how a cucumber was somehow different than having him inside of me.

“You can do everything else to me, but you won’t do that?” I scoffed. “Is this just some sort of joke between you? Felix licks me to death while you shove whatever you can inside any hole of mine you see fit, but you won’t have sex with me?” I crossed my arms, becoming a bit furious at the situation.

“Did Felix tell you he won’t?” He seemed amused to learn that, but with Sonny it was hard to tell the difference between amused and utterly pissed off.

“I mean, basically.” I looked away, thinking of every time my attempts went unacknowledged or redirected.

“I’ve corrupted you enough Pet. I want no part in the removal of the last bit of your innocence. When you come to me, I want it fully stripped away, I want you bare and covered in sin.”

“And for someone who isn’t you to have had sex with me?” I clarified in a question.

“Someone else? Let me find some other man between your legs that isn’t one of us, and I’ll deliver you his severed cock myself.” The seriousness in his tone was enough to make the hairs on my arms stand up.

“That doesn’t sound fair.”

“Life isn’t fair, haven’t you noticed?” He sneered and I huffed out in annoyance.

“Yeah. I didn’t miss that bit.” I bared my teeth before dressing myself and leaving his room.

My anger would fade with my attention span. This was the routine and I was rather used to it. We woke up together, we ate our meals together and though, despite their feelings on it not being real education, I at least got to tag along once a day for lectures. Even if it was with Sonny. All eyes always glued to me so that I had to fight that sickly feeling in my stomach when their attention suffocated me. My gaze always stayed locked on Sonny’s or down on my books.

He didn’t have to ask for it that way.

I knew.

Maybe it was because of this that Father Frollo had abandoned teaching any class the men he called heathens attended. Sonny had won and the headmaster didn’t have it in him to face the wrath of his sins. Maybe I’d really just been nothing all this time, easily forgotten, easy to move on from.

Sonny said he was a coward who couldn’t face his transgressions head on, but the nuns insisted he’d been called away to oversee higher problems during those classes. This only irritated Sonny further, who insisted ‘if the bastard wasn’t even gonna show his face, why were they here?’ The idea

that they would pack up and be gone one day as if they'd never been here at all made me feel some kind of hollow inside.

Like someone had taken a scoop out of my chest.

It made me angry that they could come in here and disrupt the order of everything, set it all ablaze, and just walk away and leave me with the ruins.

No. They would leave me *in* the ruins.

"You okay?" Felix asked, raising an eyebrow up at me from behind the kitchen island while he cooked our breakfast.

"Hmm?" I snapped back into the present moment.

"You're doing that really cute thing where you ball your fists really tight and scrunch your eyebrows up like you're thinking about something that makes you mad." He let a soft laugh out like he'd seen this expression a million times already and I gasped, my eyes darting over to Sonny just for a moment.

I was unfortunate enough to meet his gaze before looking back away. I glanced down to see both my fists resting on the marble counter, the white of my knuckles pushing through the skin tightly. He was right.

I was mad.

And somehow it made me even more angry at the thought of him having me figured out. They all did. In their own ways they'd figured out pieces of me, but none of them had the entire puzzle. Because I could only reveal parts of myself to each of them. They brought out different sides of me that I didn't even know existed because I never had the chance to explore them on my own.

Shards of me that I'd either long forgotten, or that had been tainted and shrunk down smaller by Frollo's undoing until I no longer recognized them as parts of myself.

“I want to talk to him,” I said quietly, hoping that only Felix would hear me.

It was a hopeful wish considering Corvin was to my right and Sonny to my left.

“No,” Sonny said, scrolling through his phone, eyes not even bothering to look away from the screen.

I didn’t have to say who. He knew.

“I need to talk to him,” I looked only to Felix, hoping that I could give him the kind of look that would soften him into letting me have my way.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea Mina.” He shook his head but his eyes darted over to Sonny.

“No,” Sonny said again, drier than the first time.

I huffed under my breath and Corvin kicked my shin without so much as turning his head my way. It was his way of telling me to suck it up and fight for what I wanted. But Sonny was relentless when it came to Frollo. We’d been doing this dance since the second week of the semester. I’d try to reason and convince him to let me go see Frollo, Felix deflected to Sonny and Sonny always shot me down.

The power balance between the three of them made no sense either. Neither of the Ecuras bothered to make too many decisions if Sonny was around. Whether that was out of choice, habit, or something else I couldn’t discern.

“Why does Sonny get to decide everything?” I asked, conjuring up every ounce of courage I had stored in my veins from being a coward for so long.

He didn’t like that.

“I get to decide everything because I’m the one who always ends up cleaning up the messes. I get to decide because I’m the one who keeps you

safe. You want to throw that all away for him to fill your mind with more lies? Go. But don’t come back here if you do.” He said it like he didn’t care either way, pushing the stool with a scratching sound against the floors.

He stood, grabbing his plate and taking it to the sink before walking out of the kitchen, not sparing a second glance at me.

I could feel the drift grow wider between us.

“That kick was me telling you to quit while you were ahead, not *poke the bear even further*,” Corvin murmured low enough to keep Felix from hearing him.

“I could have sworn that was the same kick you used last week when he told me I couldn’t have ice cream for lunch.” I rolled my eyes, not bothering to answer him as quietly as he’d initiated.

“You’re a fucking idiot, you tryin’ to get him to kill her?” Felix asked his brother, pulling all of our plates and rinsing them under the running water one by one. “And you, don’t push Sonny. Not on this, and maybe not on anything for a while. He’s… under a lot of stress.”

I didn’t miss the way the twin’s eyes met and the way they communicated silently as if I wasn’t even there, taking up space right next to them.

“You’re being rude.” I stood up from the stool.

Corvin cleared his throat.

“Arlan Black was rushed to the hospital early this week with a heart attack.” Felix explained, though I have a feeling it was meant for his brother and not me.

“Why are you talking about this?” Sonny reentered the room, glaring sharp knives at both Escuras like he wasn’t impressed with where the conversation had gone.

“You still don’t trust me, it’s why you won’t let me go to Frollo. That’s why you tell me nothing!” I called him out and his gaze turned something sinister towards me.

“And why are *you* so brave right now?” He paused, biting his lip like he was stopping himself from using my nickname, like he wasn’t sure if I deserved it.

“I-I’m not.” I backed up a step when he closed the distance between us too fast, his neck bent as he looked down on me.

“Good. Because the worst thing you could do is try to pry the truth from Claüde Frollo’s wretched tongue.”

“You won’t even let me try?” I asked, both the brothers looking uncomfortable like they didn’t want to be in the room when I brought out the worst in Sonny again.

“You are the closest thing we have to proof of Frollo’s transgressions. He’s not a stupid man, if I let you go to him he will erase all traces of his wrong doings. I can’t take that chance.”

“So it’s not about keeping me safe,” I snorted out, crossing my arms over my chest. “It’s about keeping me alive so you can use me.”

He grabbed me by the shoulders, his lip peeling up from the anger that coursed feverishly through him. His hand squeezed tightly and he shook me.

“Listen here you stupid girl. Do not fuck this up for me. Stay away from Frollo. Don’t make me lock you in here.”

“Not much different from him then, are you?” I hissed, our noses practically touching. I ran past him, barging into Felix’s room for a place to hide.

It was a moot point. There was nowhere to hide from them here.

They were everywhere, surrounding me, suffocating me like a cloud of poison.

I buried my face into Felix's pillow, the tears pouring out of me freely and soaking into the pillow that smelled so much like fire and cinnamon. It was his smell, it was woodsy and spicy all in one and somehow it was starting to smell like…

Home.

"You okay?" His husky voice lulled into my ear, and I felt his cold fingers gently tuck a strand of hair behind my ear.

The mattress sank with his weight behind me, but he didn't crowd into my space.

"I'm tired of everyone else deciding how I get to live," I said without turning to face him, doing my best to hide the tears.

"I bet," he said, pulling his legs up onto the bed and scooching closer to me.

"But yet you tell me not to push him? You want me to be the same complacent thing he wants from me too.

"You're wrong." His voice darkened.

It was the kind of cold tone I rarely heard from him, and I instinctively turned to give him my attention.

"I love discovering new parts of you. Every time you get comfortable enough to show us these new sides of you, I'm ready to know them. Don't lump me in with him, with whatever idea you've got in your head for how I feel about you Mina." The back of his hand grazed gently against the side of my face before dipping under my chin to lift my head up.

"I'm not that coward. I'm not afraid to tell you what you mean to me." His lips locked onto mine, soft, but needy with a story he couldn't write

himself.

It told of a boy with too much on his shoulders. Too much love, too much sadness, too much hope. And all of these things he felt within himself, he felt them in me too. It’s why our souls sang to each other, and it was why I didn’t feel the brutal pang of loneliness around him.

Not like I felt when I was on my own.

His tongue pushed through my lips, and I parted them to let him in. Felix’s kisses weren’t demanding like Sonny’s, no, his were a generous bounty I could steal from without a second regard to what he might lose from it.

And I wanted to take as much as he’d let me.

“Tell me then.” I asked, needing to know that I was more than nothing to someone, anyone at all. “What you feel.”

“Sonny, I think he sees you as something to corrupt, something to mold the way he desires, for his own purpose. And that’s not his fault, that’s the only kind of love he knows, it’s the only kind of love he was taught. I don’t see you as a blank slate. You’re not a canvas that hasn’t been soiled by the artist's idea of what beauty is. You’re not made to be sculpted into an image of my liking, you’re exactly what you need to be. I think the longer I’m around you, I get to see that the image has been there all along, maybe it was a little faded, maybe it was forgotten. But it’s there and I think it always has been.” My bottom lip quivered but I held back the urge to cry.

“Watching you experience anything for the first time, seeing your eyes go wide with bewilderment, that’s the best chance I’ve gotten to experience something sacred. That’s the closest thing to Church I’ve known.” I could feel my heart thundering when he spoke each word and the urge to cry was overpowering.

I pulled him down and he chuckled into my mouth as he lowered himself on top of me.

“Did I not make you come hard enough this morning?” His fingers trailed over the moistened fabric on the crotch of my panties.

I never had the right words when Felix went from sweet to brash, but it took my head for a bigger spin than I thought I could ever get used to. I pressed back into him purposefully, feeling his hardened erection on me and he lifted an eyebrow up.

“I want to feel you inside me,” I whispered but he shook his head.

“I don’t need my cock to make you come.”

“Let me touch you?” I asked and his eyes widened like he wasn’t expecting me to ask that.

It had been on my brain ever since Reesa had snuck me those books. Some were ancient, covers with shirtless men and things considered depraved in every intent and purpose by the church and God.

One book in particular burrowed its way into my mind, the descriptions of the female main character handling her partner’s intimate parts with so much confidence and ease. The moans of pleasure that came from his mouth and how her touch could unravel even the most stoic of men.

I wanted to feel that kind of power.

I felt some of it when I took pleasure from them, but I wanted the kind of power that came from dishing it out as well.

I bravely palmed my hand over his pants, feeling the thick circumference of his length hardening even more under my touch. He grunted a low sound in my ear that sent goosebumps up my spine and encouraged me to keep going. Not fighting the urge to squeeze him through the fabric.

“Tell me what to do?” I looked back up at him to find his head dropped back and his eyes closed.

“You really want to?” he asked and I nodded.

“I want to make you feel as good as you make me feel.” Because I couldn’t put it to words for him that it wasn’t just about the things he did to me but about how he made me feel.

That him wanting me was the only thing that had ever happened to me that wasn’t cursed in some way. That I didn’t feel so empty inside because of him and that was enough to make me want to give him everything I had.

Even if all I had to give was me.

“On your knees then.” His voice took an assertive tone and he removed his shirt while I scrambled onto the floor.

He stood in front of me before lowering his pants down, his size pushing against his tight boxer briefs before he lowered them as well. He sprung out of his pants, his erection hitting the hard ridges of his carved-out abs and I licked my lips instinctively as my mouth filled with saliva.

“Start just using your tongue. Use one of your hands to hold it at the base.” I gripped tightly on his command, and he gasped from my touch.

“Like this?” I asked, swirling my tongue over the head like I’d read in a book.

“Oh, fuck yes.” He gripped the back of my head and tugged gently at my hair.

I wrapped my mouth over the swollen head, swirling my tongue over it wildly inside of my mouth. “Just like that Mina.” He tugged on my hair, and I gazed upwards at him.

He was gorgeous, irrevocably so in the kind of way that would leave you wounded when he left a room. I couldn’t imagine the type of damage that

he caused when he left your life. His eyes met mine and he granted me a crooked smile, a dimple carved into his cheek from the expression.

“You’re doing so good. *So good.* Now deeper.” He urged me on, and I wrapped my lips over his thick shaft, circling my tongue slowly while I took him in the back of my throat.

I hollowed my cheeks, doing my best to receive him fully, but he was just too thick and far too long. He hit the back of my throat and I pulled back with a strained cough.

“Relax your throat, breathe through your nose.” I nodded before he used his hold on the hair on the back of my head to reel me in.

I did my best to remember all of the instructions, moving my tongue ravenously over his impossibly hard erection and relaxing my throat every time he bobbed my head further down his length. Either this was the end of the lesson or he’d forgotten that he was teaching me. His chest reverberated with a deep rumbling and he groaned incoherently. His pace picked up and my eyes watered each time he came closer to bottoming out inside my mouth.

I clenched my thighs together to relieve some of the pressure that built deep in my core. I was the one dealing out all the pleasure here, to the point where I was somehow gifting it back to myself.

“Are you wet?” he asked as if he could sense the fire building inside of me. “Show me.”

I let my free hand find its way into my panties and stroked through the slickness dripping out of me. I lingered around my clit, rubbing up and down the same way that Felix did that could bring me to climax in no time.

“I said show me.” He interrupted me, taking a stern tone that he never used with me.

I brought my fingers out and lifted them up above my head to show him. He continued guiding my head up and down, increasing the speed even more so that I had to hold onto his hip with my other hand to brace myself. Between his moans and the sloppy sounds of my mouth drawing pleasure from him I was losing myself in the trance of it all. I felt his mouth on my fingers, sucking my arousal clean from them before he let them go.

“I’m close. Open your mouth, tongue out.” I obliged, following each step in order.

He tightened his hold on my hair, pulling harder and slamming into my throat with a roughness that pulled more tears from the edges of my eyes. Warm, salty ropes of sticky liquid landed on my tongue, over my cheek and on my chest.

“Swallow.” I did, taking the essence of him down with a hard gulp.

He stuffed himself back into his underwear and pulled his pants up before grabbing a glass of water off of his nightstand and handing it to me. He walked out of the room for a brief second and came back with a towel in his hand. It was warm and wet against my face when he cleaned the remainder of his release off of me.

The urge to feel him was unbearable now.

“Touch me, please.” I breathed out and he hooked his arm around my waist and pulled me into him.

“I told you, now you tell me what I mean to *you.”* he asked, ignoring my plea.

“I-I don’t know,” I stammered out, not knowing how to put it into thoughts let alone words. “All I know is I don’t ever want to have a day without you.”

His head tilted sideways, and a soft smile barely pushed its way out. His lips locked over mine as if he didn’t care that the taste of his cum was still staining my tongue.

*OceanofPDF.com*

“That sounds like love Mina.” I loved the way her eyes brightened to a clearer blue at the sound of the word love.

“I don’t know what love is. But I know that I want you around,” she said so sincerely that I could only appreciate the way her lack of words sometimes said everything, even when she didn’t mean for it to.

I laid her back onto the bed, slipping my hand up the black dress she was wearing and pushed her underwear down to her ankles. She gasped, the way she always did when I first made contact with that perfect pussy of hers and then whimpered when I slid my fingers up and down her clit.

“Ehem.” I heard Sonny clearing his throat and turned my head to find him standing at my open door. An annoyed look covered his face, but I was starting to see the cracks in his mask for what they were.

He was losing his grip.

“We need to leave soon.” His eyes trailed down to where my hand threatened to be swallowed up by her and his lip twitched up involuntarily.

“I gotta finish something here, she’s all wound up. It would be rude to not take care of our pet.” I provoked him, using the nickname he himself had created for her.

It had been a while since I heard him say it, and I was starting to figure out why he’d carved a rift so wide between them.

“You can help me if you’re in a rush.” I invited him, her eyes growing bright again at my suggestion and her cheeks flooding with crimson red.

It was almost like watching a robot glitch out. Watching his brain try to process and analyze the eighteen million ways this could go wrong or right before he acted on his urges. They’d already gone this far, so for him to pretend like there wasn’t something between them was just stupid on his part.

And that was the problem really.

Neither of them knew how to love, or what love was. So they both confused it for hate.

Her breathing turned shallow while I continued to toy with her, lifting her dress up to fully expose her to him. Her eyes were glued to him, and his gaze was nearly predatory, honed in on her as he held himself back with more restraint than I’d ever seen. I sunk two fingers deep inside her, feeling her pillowy walls clenching around my fingers and she let out a whimper.

She bit her lip.

It wasn’t intended to be seductive but with her legs splayed open and her cunt dripping onto my sheets there was no other way around it.

“Are you just going to stand there, or are you going to help?” I asked in the most antagonizing way possible, and he huffed a response that sounded more like a growl than anything else.

“You’re fucking doing it wrong,” he said stepping into the room, scowl carved deeper than ever. “Flip over Romina,” he commanded but her eyes narrowed and she used her forearms to peddle back on the bed, closer to the headboard and away from him.

“You afraid you’re gonna like it more when you hate me?” he said with a sneer, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Maybe I won’t like it at all.” She raised her eyebrows in challenge.

Sonny was right.

She was getting brave.

The timid girl we’d found was slowly turning into a firecracker, exploding at every chance she could to remind us that she was not something to be disregarded so easily.

“Oh I doubt that very much, Romina.” He narrowed his eyes at her, ignoring her combative tone. “Now flip.” His voice darkened and she turned onto her stomach, hugging the pillow into her chest.

“Ah!” She cried out when Sonny plunged three fingers into her with no warning, making an inward and downward motion all at once.

“Do you like that, Mina?” I asked her, but she buried her face into the pillow, as if responding was somehow too much.

“Answer him.” Sonny pulled his fingers out and ran them over her clit, forcing her hips to move involuntarily.

“Yes!” she cried out, like she was more than used to Sonny’s demands.

He shoved his fingers in again, emphasizing the downward motion and using his palm against her clit. A sharp squeal fought its way out of her throat, and she clenched her fists tightly against the bedsheets, her face still pressed firmly into the pillow.

“Should I put a fourth finger in?”

“Yeah.” I smirked.

“No,” she muffled out like a moan shaking her head into the pillow.

He did it anyway.

“Stop! Please!” she cried, bucking her hips against his fingers while he plunged them inside her mercilessly.

He didn’t stop. Instead he went faster, harder than before.

“Hey…” I grabbed his arm, “She’s telling you to stop.” I tried to pull him off but he pushed me away.

“She’s got a safeword.” He frowned at me. “Stop ain’t it.”

I crossed my arms and stepped back, watching her come undone on his fingers while her mouth betrayed her body.

He leaned forward to whisper something in her ear and she shook her head from side to side. He picked up the pace, four fingers inside her, his thumb circling her clit while the other hand held her hip against him. Pulling her lower half off the bed and straddling her over his thigh he ground her against his hard-on, glazing his pants with her arousal.

“Ahh! Ahh! Ahh!” she cried out.

Her body trembled from waves of pleasure shattering over her.

Sonny pulled his hand out dramatically, moving out of the way while she squirted her climax onto my bed.

“What?” I shouted out with excitement. “I didn’t know she could do that. I didn’t know you could do that!” I laughed out, way more impressed than I probably should have been.

“It’s not a question of whether she can do it, it's a question of whether *you* can make her,” Sonny said, wiping his fingers on his shirt and walking out of the room.

I side eyed him before towering over Mina and scooping her into my arms.

“You’re so pretty when you come.” I kissed her, nipping at her lower lip gently before letting go.

“I want to do more than this,” she said with a whine, biting her own lip from nervousness.

“Is this not enough?” I tried deflecting again, she’d been dropping hints and asking more often.

I couldn’t let her know that I was avoiding it because I didn’t want to get any closer.

I was obsessed with this girl.

Burying my cock deep inside of her was the only thing I thought about. But she had this thing with Sonny and at the end of the day, I’d be blind to try to pretend like she didn’t have something else with Corvin too. Where did that leave all of us? It felt like we’d reached an unspoken stalemate.

We didn’t fuck her.

I wasn’t going to be the one to break the balance. I knew my heart couldn’t handle the consequences.

“Please,” she begged, her hands trailing over my cock through my pants.

“I would rather just bring you pleasure, think of me as your servant.” I grabbed a towel to help her clean up and I winked her way.

She saw right through me, scowling and ripping the towel from my hand to wipe herself off. She pulled her underwear up and adjusted herself before walking out the door.

“Are they leaving me with you?” She walked into Corvin’s room like she was more than used to how things worked around here.

“Wanna get ice cream?” he asked, her eyes going wide and she smiled bigger than when she got fingerbanged by Sonny.

She nodded dramatically and he pushed up off of his bed, grabbing the bottle of pills that sat on the nightstand.

“Call your little stupid friend,” he told her and she squealed before pulling her phone out of her pocket to call Reesa.

I felt bad that my brother needed to have some sort of fucking chaperone for every moment of his life now. But what the fuck would happen if he blacked out in the middle of fuck knows where, and the only person who could help him was Mina?

I’d hate to say it, but they would probably be fucked.

Fucked.

Sonny and I waited outside the gate for Arlan’s people to let us in. Security was tight now that the old man’s health was officially in question. It would be easy for anyone to off the fucker and for it to get passed off as natural causes.

He was already waiting at the head of his twenty-foot-long dining table with hot tea and some sort of custard tart on fancy plates. I’d never seen him in anything less than a three-piece suit before, not that I could remember at least. But he was in a nightgown that reminded me of the first time we saw Romina. She looked so different now, dressed to fit the mold

that Corvin and Sonny craved, but damned if it didn't look damn good on her.

"Sir, did you forget to get dressed?" I asked, taking my seat to his right of the head of the table.

"I'm a dying eighty-nine year old man, do you think I have time for such formalities, boy?" he wheezed out with a cough.

"Sir, you are ninety-six." Sonny reminded him.

"What the fuck would either of you know? You're a fifth my age and ten times as stupid. Why are you here?" He spat out like he'd already forgotten he was the one who summoned *us*, slapping his hand on the solid wooden table.

"I'm here because I thought you'd want to know that we have your granddaughter." Sonny spoke, startling the fuck out of me with brand new information.

My head spun so fast that I had a rough time pretending like this wasn't the first time this news graced my ears. We always did our best to appear united in front of the old man, but I couldn't hide my shock or pain. Sonny had been holding onto this, maybe because he didn't trust me enough to let me know or because he'd held onto it for so long he thought he was past the point of no return. I narrowed my eyes at Arlan to see little to no evidence of shock in his own expression, a skill he honed with time and then passed down to his non-blood heir.

"Are you certain?" he asked, looking my way.

Despite my being clueless I knew better than to show my surprise and reveal the lack of communication between us. I nodded. Arlan scowled disapprovingly from my lack of words but the old man was too frail to scare me these days.

“You don’t seem surprised sir.” I pointed out.

“Claüde Frollo was my apprentice, before I married and long before my daughter Korina was born.”

“You didn’t think we deserved to know this before you sent us to him?” Sonny gritted out, clearly pissed but still well aware of his place in this house.

“The path wasn’t for him. He had too many doubts and after everything, I was right to take it away from him. He ran like a coward to God in the end. I just never expected he would take my daughter from me. How do you know for certain she’s a Black?” He ignored Sonny, prodding further.

“You may have tried to hide your daughter’s memory around here, but you still have a trace or two of the ghost of Korina Black haunting these halls. I saw her photos when I was young.” He pulled out his phone and shoved the picture of Romina in his face, a smile far too big that showed off her biggest weakness.

Her kindness.

The world had already eaten her alive, but she couldn’t stop going back, throwing scraps of herself over the cage as if feeding the beast was somehow more important than staying alive.

“Who else in this world had that silver and black hair like she did? Like *she* does?” Sonny pulled the image back and it was the closest resemblance to some sort of emotion I’d ever seen on the old man’s face.

If Romina was Arlan Black’s granddaughter, what did that mean? And if Claüde Frollo had been Arlan’s apprentice, had we somehow ended up insects, stuck in a much bigger web than we could see?

“Telling, very much so. I’ll need more proof than that. Bring the girl here, If she is my granddaughter, I should like to meet her before I die.” He

wheezed again, slapping on the table while he choked on his own lungs until one of the servants wheeled over his oxygen tank.

He strapped the mask to his face and turned up the output on the tank, inhaling a big draw of breath. I tapped my fingers on the table impatiently, side eyeing Sonny to find him far too calm while he sipped his tea.

He knew I was seething. Pissed as hell but far too damn proud to show Arlan that there was weakness in our bond. I'd let out my anger later, in private. Like our adoptive guardian had taught us.

"I don't think so," I told him, getting Sonny to pause his next sip of tea and turn his head in my direction just slightly.

He hid the faintest smile behind his teacup.

"Excuse me?" Arlan wheezed, his voice raising as he tried to remind me of who he still was.

"Here." Sonny tossed a ziplock bag with a toothbrush inside of it, like he knew Arlan so well he could have predicted this outcome. "That has her DNA on it. You can find out if she's really yours that way."

"You won't bring me my own granddaughter? Need I remind you I can and *will* take everything from you before I die?" His voice began to echo through his high ceilings.

"How can we be sure you won't hurt her?" I asked him.

"Hurt her? How daft can you be, boy?" His fist slammed again but he winced in pain from his own weakness.

"Would you have raised her differently than us old man? She's fragile, she's good. You don't deserve her, and I'll keep her as far away from you as I can." Sonny stood up angrily, not holding back his thoughts.

"I am making peace with the things I cannot change." His face turned stony.

“Have you found God, Arlan?” Sonny barked out a laugh, sending a chill down my spine.

His fist slammed down on the table angrily, silverware clinking loudly against the china forcing us to bestow him with our attention and respect.

“Bring her to me and I’ll sign over your belongings to you so that you can leave that forsaken farce of a school.” He bartered, making Sonny’s eyes light up.

I didn’t give a fuck about the money anymore. Even if we lost it all, everything. I would have rather spent my days in a poorhouse as long as I spent them next to Romina. Exposing her to him didn’t feel right. I promised I’d protect her, at the end of the day Arlan Black was far more toxic than Claüde Frollo could have ever been.

Had she been granted a favor with her upbringing?

Who would she have grown up to be had she been raised as one of us?

Arlan was a grandfather to us, because he’d been a father to all of our mothers. Despite having lost his own daughter he took us in when all three of the daughters of Satan had been declared dead. But there was nothing familial or comforting about him.

He felt the prophetic weight of doom calling out to him. The end of the Satanic Shrine. Big red wasn’t on his side anymore. There was no side, there was just energy, chaos, and the ones who served it. That was the difference between us. Arlan thought there was a devil pulling the strings. We were that devil, and we knew just where the strings connected.

We made our own magic.

We studied the runes, the ancient texts, and the scriptures until we learned every ritual like the back of our hands, better than he ever had.

We'd learned to call on ancient demons and use them for our bidding in exchange for the right offerings.

We learned that light and shadow weren't enemies, but symbiotic creatures who couldn't exist without each other.

It was a beautiful hypocrisy and we worked it to our advantage.

"What do you want to come of it?" Sonny asked and the old man cleared a lump from his throat, struggling to breathe.

"I expect I'll find out if she's worthy of my legacy. Of my name." He said in an icy tone that let us know that was the only thing that truly mattered to him.

That's why he'd effectively ruled for so long, no threat of being usurped by his predecessors because he kept emotion out of his choices. He made every decision out of facts and heavily collected information and he did it well.

The same traits he imparted onto Sonny so that he could become an efficient leader. I imagine Korina Black would have been very much the same way, had she stayed alive long enough. Sharp, bitter, and full of poison. I thought about Romina and wondered if nurture or nature would win over her. That sweet, innocent aura that hung over her was slowly turning black and thick like tar. It didn't so much glow above her as it did drip down like battery acid eating away at what she used to be.

It was funny in that way.

Now that I knew who she was I could see so clearly that the more time she spent around us, the more she was just becoming who she was always meant to be had she been raised with us. But that sweetness that lived inside her was hers and hers alone. It wasn't something that she cultivated from Frollo, or that she was born with as a Black. It was just who she was. That

alone was enough to make me want to tell Arlan to go to hell, that he'd die without meeting her, without corrupting her or making her feel unworthy of his name.

"Bring me my granddaughter. I have a right to meet her." He braced himself against the chair as he stood from the table, dropping the oxygen mask down while a servant took him by the arm.

"Fine. But you don't tell her who she is or what you are to her. Not till we say she's ready. I'm not gonna let you die and fuck her up even more," Sonny said, standing up as well. "You've done enough, don't you think?"

Arlan peeled his lip up in anger but nodded in agreement before turning his back on us and walking away. I exhaled heavily, turning to face Sonny.

"I'll allow you to be upset over this," he said, turning on his heels like that was the end of the conversation.

So fucking typical.

"How long have you known?" I asked, following him past the twenty-foot table.

He reached up behind his head to scratch his hair and I scowled, realizing just how long he'd been holding on to this secret.

"You didn't think we deserved to know?" I raised my voice, crossing my arms over my chest.

"I was hoping he'd fucking die first, is that so goddamn wrong?" he yelled, losing his composure completely and taking me by surprise.

It wasn't often Sonny Santorini was out of his depth. Not in control of a situation. I would let this go for now. It was more important to try to figure out how we would ease her to this new information.

"What the fuck happened to Korina Black and why does Claüde Frollo have her daughter?" I changed the subject.

“That seems to be the million dollar question, and it seemed like he was only giving us half the answer.”

We made our way out of the dining hall and escorted ourselves out, as we always did. Making sure to slowly walk by Medusa’s terrarium. It was a floor to ceiling enclosure the old man had made for his leucistic pit viper. She was a mean, grumpy, old bitch who was venomous as hell and even angrier to boot.

In all my life I’d never seen her out of her cage, and there was a part of me that wondered if the snake was ancient, or if the bastard was just replacing her year after year. Her tail vibrated back and forth the minute she sensed our presences looming over the glass. I swear, this viper held grudges too. We used to dance in front of her cage, riling her up when we were kids with nothing better to do. Then as I got older, I started sleeping in the guest house. I became afraid she’d break out of the glass and bite me in my sleep for tormenting her.

I would have deserved it.

She opened her mouth and hissed, fangs bared and sharp but her eyes that milky fog that let me know she was ready to shed her skin.

“Bye Medusa,” I taunted, and Sonny chuckled as if he’d been thinking about her too. “Why does he keep her anyway? I have never seen him look at that snake.”

“It was hers,” he explained before opening the door.

The light of the day broke through brightly as we stepped outside.

“Hello beautiful girl.” I breathed in her sweet scent and she wrapped her arms around my waist to greet me as she often did when I walked through the doors.

She was wearing a black pleated skirt that came up high on her waist and a skintight mesh shirt with a stringy black bra underneath. She wore a sterling silver necklace with a large spider hanging from the chain, its legs so intricately real I couldn’t help but reach out to hold it.

It was heavy in my hands.

“Where did this come from?” I said, smoothing my fingers over the spider ritualistically while it triggered something deeper inside of me.

A memory I’d buried long ago.

She tilted her head at Corvin who shrugged.

“It looks good on her, better than collecting dust in a box.” He was right.

It looked right on her, it made her eyes brighter and her skin more golden. It called to the light inside of her without dissolving the darkness that was there as well. I pulled on the chain and brought her closer to me.

“Why do I feel like you’ve been everywhere but with me lately? You makin’ me miss you on purpose Mina?” I breathed quietly into her ear and she didn’t bother to conceal the soft smirk growing on her face.

“Why would I do that?” she said with a sheepish look on her face that made me want to eat her up right there.

“Hmm.” I moved closer to her. “Because you’re as devious as you look, no matter how much you try to hide it.” I ran my hands over her body, forcing a quiet whimper from her. “Did you miss me too?” I whispered and she bit her lip in response, fighting the smile that I could see wanted so badly to show itself to me.

“We need to talk.” Sonny cut through from behind me like a record scratching in the distance.

Her mood shifted dramatically, and her expression sobered. She glared knives at him, but he ignored her chosen demeanor and went on.

“Sit.” He gestured her to the couch, and she took her place next to Corvin.

He wrapped an arm around her in a protective way that looked too natural for them, she leaned into him. She trusted him with her more than we did, despite the fact he almost killed her the first time they’d met. She never brought it up, never held it against him. Romina was like that, there was a well of understanding, forgiveness, and compassion inside of her that didn’t run dry. Despite how much the old bag of bones had tried to shape her in his image.

Somehow Sonny had managed to dig beneath the well, instead he’d found a drought. It was his own fault he never let himself feel anything for anyone at all other than the sheer codependency that bound us together.

She would be his ending.

I bought tickets to the show.

“Our families have existed for a long time. We are the center of our own… religion. If that’s what you want to call it.” He began to explain the history of the Satanic Shrine as plainly as he could and she nodded her head with each time he stopped to check her for understanding.

I sat next to her, placing my palm on the inside of her thigh and relaxing back into the couch. Sonny was rambling on, and I drowned him out, tracing circles on her sensitive skin with just the tips of my fingers. Her head tilted down just slightly and she pressed her lips into a flat line, letting me know she was more focused on my hands than Sonny's mouth.

I raked my fingers north, her thighs instinctively clenching together as her breath hitched from the motion.

"With the virus, we lost a lot of power, a lot of our control. We lost too many members. Do you understand?" he asked and she didn't answer. "Are you listening, Romina?" He raised his voice and she snapped out of the trance she'd been in.

"Hmm? Yes. Lots of power." She parroted back as best as she could and Corvin choked out a laugh.

Sonny narrowed his eyes but continued explaining our function, our ethos, and our goals while I gently drug my fingers to her center. Feeling the heat exuding from her core through the fabric of her underwear, I pressed against her already swollen clit. She whimpered, her hand squeezing tight against the muscle of my thigh.

Sonny's eyes darted down to my hand, but he didn't stop his long lecture, going from the history of how we began to how it seemed like the end of our society was inevitable with the loss of Arlan Black's heir, never once telling her the truth of who she really was. I dipped my fingers inside her underwear and Corvin cleared his throat, his arm tightening around her shoulder.

It was like a game, Sonny stopping to question her every few words to make sure she was paying attention, and me doing my best to distract her.

My fingers slipped through her slickened folds, moving up and down as slowly as possible to drag out her pleasure.

“And when Arlan says he wants something, it’s not up to us to tell him no. Okay?” he asked her just as she dropped her head back to revel in the sinking pleasure.

“Y-yes,” she gasped out and I chuckled.

I hooked my foot inside of hers and pulled her leg towards mine. As if he knew me too well, my brother had already followed suit, understanding my game and anchoring his foot on the inside of her other leg, making it impossible for her to clamp her thighs shut. Sonny’s eyes couldn’t avoid looking down while we exposed her cunt to him, and he lost his train of thought momentarily.

I sank two fingers inside of her and she lost her composure.

“Ohhh,” she moaned out, unabashedly.

Her right hand slapped down on Corvin’s leg and squeezed the moment I entered her, he cleared his throat and adjusted himself awkwardly. She came loudly while I continued to pump my fingers in and out of her, no longer trying to be discreet while Sonny finished up his summary of what our families stood for. Her nails dug into my legs through the fabric of my pants and I looked over to Corvin to find him suffering through the receiving end of her pleasure.

“Leadership has always been passed down through the Blacks. That's always how it went. For generations they only had one sole heir so there would be no motivation for foul play. When Arlan Black is gone, leadership will likely go to me.” He added the most important bit to test her attention.

“Why?” she asked, panting.

I stroked her clit with my thumb, still plunging two fingers in and out of her with a heady rhythm.

“Because Arlan’s only daughter died. As well as ours,” she frowned, breathing heavily from coming down her climax. “Your presence is demanded, not optional.” His eyes darted down once more before he took a deep breath and turned on his heels to walk out of the room and into the shower.

To jerk off, I was sure of it.

“Brother unless you plan on joining me, I would also get the fuck out of here if I were you. I’m about to have my dinner on this couch,” I said without looking at him, hooking my arm around Romina’s waist and stealing her from him.

I dropped her flatly on the couch with a squeal.

I saw the way her eyes darted over to him with my proposal, but he just scratched his head awkwardly before getting up and leaving the room. He’d get over this complex he had eventually, once he realized he was the only one who was seeing his own self-fabricated flaws.

“Here?” she whispered out and I laughed.

“Here, there, anywhere, everywhere? Does it fucking matter? I’ll have you anywhere and anyway I want. Did I not just prove that to you, pretty girl?” I asked her with a grin.

“I think you made Sonny even more mad at me.” She sighed and I barked out an even louder laugh.

“Oh Mina, I can tell you one thing I know for sure. He is *not* mad at you.” She frowned up at me. “He’s mad at himself, because no one ever taught him how to love, and now that it’s smacking him right in the face, he thinks it’s your fault for making him feel it.”

She took my words in like she was really processing them and figuring out what they meant to her.

“It isn’t.” I clarified and she let out a tiny fraction of a smile.

I crawled down her body, stopping where the hem of her skirt sat high on her thighs.

“I want to make you cum until you either die of it or my tongue stops working.” I lowered my face to her pussy, pulling her underwear down to expose her to me completely.

I didn’t stop until her screams of pleasures echoed out through the high ceilings of the chapels, nearly loud enough to be heard colliding through the copper of the bell up above in that tower. Feeling her writhe and trembling in my hold had become this addicting part of my day that I couldn’t live without.

There was something so right about her coming undone at my touch, and though it hadn’t been my intention she was set on doling out pleasure just the same as she received it. I wasn’t here to deny it either because every time she took my cock in her hands or her mouth, I died a better death than the last time.

“Oh fuck.” I took a deep breath and pushed into her mouth. “It’s like you were made for me.”

I stroked my fingers through her hair, and she hummed appreciatively at my praise, hollowing her cheeks and relaxing her throat while she took nearly all my length into her mouth. She pulled back with a sharp inhale, tears dropping down the side of her face from nearly gagging on my cock.

“I could watch you choke on me all day.” I encouraged her but instead she pulled back completely, dropping me from her mouth.

“I want more,” she said and I raised an eyebrow at her.

“Come sit on my face.” I beckoned her from her knees to where I sat on the couch, but she shook her head at me.

“That’s not what I mean.” I exhaled heavily, not wanting to go through this again.

“It’s not that simple.” I pulled her up to me, but she pushed me back with a scowl.

“Then explain it to me, because it’s starting to feel like it’s very simple, but you’re just hoping I’m too stupid to understand it.”

“That’s not true so don’t even fucking say that.” I glared down at her in a way I didn’t think I was capable of, but there was a certain kind of rage building at the idea that she thought that was how I felt.

I’d proved my feelings already.

“Then why don’t you want me?” she asked, the desperation in her voice almost too painful to ignore.

I cupped her face in my hands and pulled her up towards me.

“There’s nothing I want more than you, beautiful girl. But things are complicated right now and sex…It’s just one more thing that’s going to complicate it even further. It comes with a lot of responsibilities and hurdles I can’t jump over. Not right now.” I hummed softly in her ear hoping it would be enough, but she pushed me away, the scowl still carved deeply into her forehead.

“You and Sonny are the same, you both enjoy seeing me break in whatever way you can. At least Sonny doesn’t cover up what he’s thinking with sweet words and soft touches.” She stormed away angrily and disappeared into the dark hallway.

I heard the slam of a door and figured it was best to give her time to cool down. I’d sleep out here tonight and maybe by tomorrow she’d be less

pissed. Now that I knew who she was, putting my dick inside her felt like the biggest lie of them all. How could I fuck her knowing who she was when she didn't know it for herself?

Even more so, how the fuck was I supposed to explain to her that we lived in a world where people like us, people who saw things for how they truly were, were most afraid of bringing children into it? How was I supposed to tell her that I wasn't going to leave it up to chance, or some expired condoms, to dictate how the rest of our lives were going to go because she wanted to feel my cock inside her?

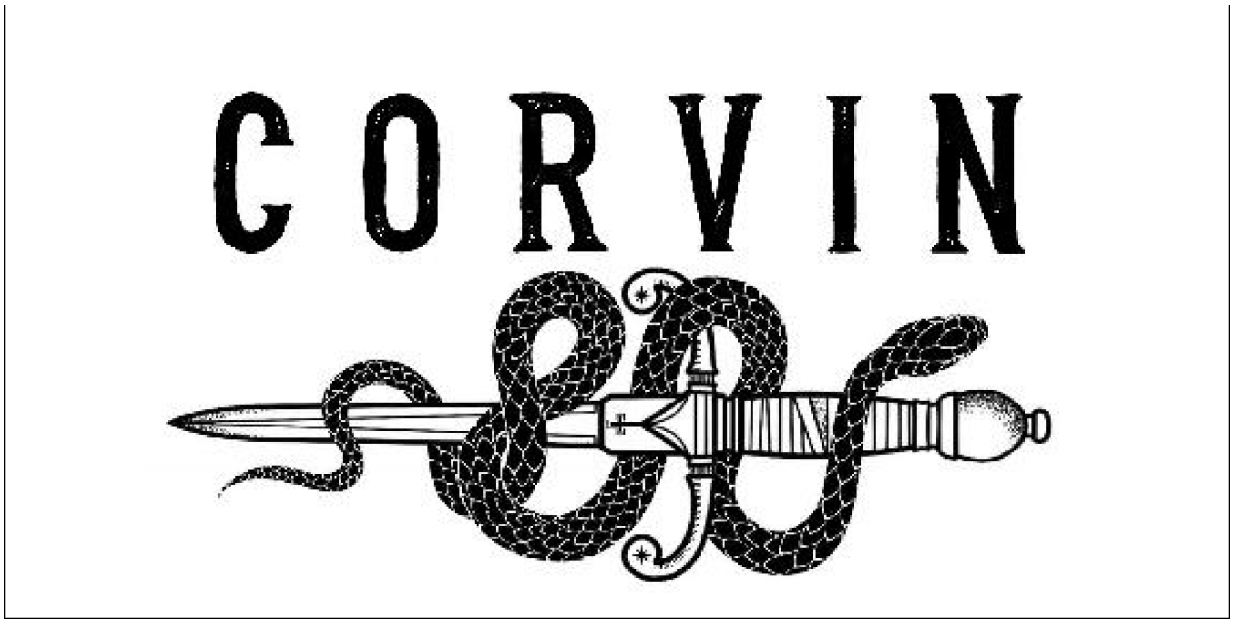
And fuck did I want it too.

But after Roe v. Wade fell, every form of birth control became outlawed. We'd need to travel far to find a doctor who was willing to risk their license and their church sanctions just to supply us with something that was either expired, or not FDA approved, and from another country. Though they provided *some* peace of mind, nothing really reduced the haunting risk that clouded over your cock at the idea of raising your kid in a world like this.

And that's how my boner died every time.

I stuffed myself back into my pants with a dramatic exhale and crossed my arms behind my head, looking for a more comfortable position to sleep in.

*OceanofPDF.com*




She came into my room pushing the door open with no regard and letting it hit the wall before it sprung back and closed on its own. Her eyes were red and puffy like she'd been crying but the look on her face said she was full of rage. Her nostrils flared and her chest heaved up and down like she was struggling to catch her breath.

She reached down and grabbed the hem of her dress before pulling it over her head and throwing it on the ground. She was wearing matching black underwear and the fabric was sheer, leaving nothing to the imagination. The bra pushed her tiny tits up even higher, the black mesh squeezing against her flesh.

I commanded my cock to play dead but for the first time in as long as I could remember it didn't listen. My meds had long since faded from my system.

Which also meant I was dangerous.

She sauntered in my direction, in no way attempting to be sexy but somehow nailing it. The sound of her whimpering still echoed in my ears from my brother finger-fucking her on the couch.

It was hard to deny how much I wanted this girl, but I knew there wasn't a future like that for someone like me.

"What the fuck are you doing?" I said, leaning my back against the frame of my bed.

"You told me that you like me. Right?" she asked, so much of her nervous mannerism fading as each day went by.

"I did. We are *friends*." I emphasized, raising an eyebrow at her as she continued to move my way slowly.

"You're all awfully irritating," she said in a snide tone.

"How so, little lamb?"

"Your brother says he likes me *too* much, and it's quite obvious Sonny doesn't like me at all. Now you're telling me that you can like someone as a friend? How many ways can you all avoid this?"

"Too much? Not at all? What are you asking of them?" I tried to piece together her disjointed thoughts.

"Nothing they can't give me. But they won't." She exhaled through her still flared nostrils, she was pissed. "I just want to be in control of what happens to my body. I want to get to choose."

That was a request I could sympathize with.

"What are you asking of *me*?" I narrowed my eyes, though with her naked in my room it was hard to pretend like I didn't already know.

"You know what I want," she said bluntly.

"I'm not the one, little lamb." I shook my head at her, though with her giftwrapped in front of me it was hard to believe the words were coming

out of my mouth.

“Someone has to be, why not you?” Her eyes glossed over as she stood above my bed.

“Because I don’t want to be responsible for breaking your heart, Romi. You give your body to me, and I’ll take everything else that goes with it. But I’m a selfish bastard. I’ll only ever like you; I can’t do more than that. Do you understand?” I asked but she shook her head.

“It means, I can’t love you because I don’t love myself.” I hoped she would turn away but my words lit her up like a beacon and she swung her leg over mine, settling down into my lap.

“I don’t know what love is Corvin. I’m not asking for anything I don’t understand. Kiss me please.” She was inches from my face.

“I don’t want to hurt you.” I reminded her and myself, since my body was already trying to convince my mind we were on board.

“You won’t,” she said like she had all the fucking confidence in the world when it came to me.

I leaned forward, grabbing her face with both of my hands and sealing my lips around hers. I’d been fighting every part of me that wanted this for weeks, trying to find some reason why I couldn’t trust her, couldn’t let her in.

I was fucked up goods and eventually she’d see that, like the rest of them did. Then after she took what she wanted she’d be on her way, back to the others’ beds. It was probably for the best.

“You say that like you already forgot what I did to you.” I wrapped both hands softly around her throat, not a threat, just a reminder.

“It wasn’t your fault,” she said, her voice coated in a layer of seductiveness that had me wondering if she wanted me to squeeze.

“I don’t trust myself,” I told her truthfully and she ground down onto my erection, the heat coming from her center was enough to drive me crazy. “Oh fuck it.”

I gave in, tangling my fingers through her hair and pulling her into me, realizing it’d been too long since I’d last felt lips this soft against mine and relishing the sweet smell that came from her. She ground down again and I let a low, pained growl escape me. She pulled away from the kiss with startled eyes and an unsure look to her.

“Did I do something wrong?” she asked.

“You couldn’t if you tried. I’m just a fucking idiot.” I brought her back to me, palming her breast through the bra and listening to the soft moans that came from deep inside her chest.

“What do you mean?” she asked, breaking the kiss again and I groaned in frustration.

“Because I’ve spent this whole time fighting this, pretending like you didn’t do this to me. There’s no one like you Romina. Don’t let any of these assholes change you, even me. Okay?” She nodded. “You really want to do this?” I asked again.

“Please.” She nodded again, her hand finding the swell of my cock through the fabric of my boxers.

With a smooth movement I grabbed her hips and pulled her under me so that I was hovering over her, her back to the mattress and her legs hooked around my hips. I tore her panties at the side, gathering an unexpected squeal from her when I ripped the remaining fabric off of her.

“Do you know how much trouble I’m going to get in for this?” I asked her, sliding the head of my cock over her cunt, up and down but never in, coating it in her arousal.

She gasped breathily from the friction against her most sensitive parts. “They don’t have to know,” she whispered, like she’d make any sort of bargain to get her way at this point.

“And how long do you think we could keep this little secret?” I asked her and she let out a small smirk, like she herself already knew the men she lived with well enough to know there were no secrets here.

“Please,” she whimpered again, her hand reaching low and squeezing around my shaft gently.

I groaned at her touch, another low hum escaping my throat while she toyed with the head of my cock. Her fingers danced around the tip like she’d done this before but wasn’t quite sure *what* she was doing.

“Who taught you how to do that?” I asked.

“I read it in a book.” She looked down like she was embarrassed, “Then Felix, kind of.” She scrunched her nose in a cute way like she was thinking about it. “Is it okay?”

“Fuck yeah, little lamb.” I threw my head back and enjoyed the feeling of her hand stroking me up and down, using her own arousal as lube.

“Stop,” I said and her hands came to an abrupt end.

She frowned at me, and I could see her insecurities floating around in her head. She wore her emotions well, and while it served me, it didn’t do her any favors. She needed to be taught that her enemies not knowing what she was thinking was the most important tool she could have.

I pulled her chin up, barely touching our lips together before plunging my tongue deep inside her mouth. Her moans erupted from her chest, rising to her throat when I claimed her kiss for myself. Our tongues collided, caressing each other in a harmony that sent a bolt of lightning straight to my dick.

“If you keep going, I’ll come before we even start. I want to enjoy this. I haven’t done this in a while.” I crawled my way down her body and buried my face in her cunt.

I ran my tongue down, dipping it inside her pussy and coming back up to swirl over her clit.

“Oh, God,” she moaned.

“Fuck, you taste so sweet little lamb. I could eat you alive.” I lapped up every drop of the nectar that dripped down her thighs.

“Corvin!” She bucked her hips in the air.

I’d been listening to her nearly every night. Her soft whimpers and honeyed moans of pleasure coming from my brother’s room. Then at one in the morning, without fail, every night, I heard the tapping of her feet when she made her way to Sonny’s room. A routine they’d somehow made seem so normal even though she screamed feral sounds that I couldn’t discern from pain or bliss.

But she still went.

Every night, until more recently at least.

Now it was quiet.

Well, not *now*. I chuckled to myself.

I thrusted two fingers deep inside her with no warning, hooking them with a curl of my knuckles against her g-spot while my tongue continued to work her senseless. Her head thrashed back, and both her hands went to her mouth as if to stop herself from screaming something.

Her orgasm was quick but it was powerful enough to leave her shaking while her hips bucked in sync with the thrust of my fingers.

“Have you had enough?” I asked with a serious tone, tilting my head to the side as I rose over her again to examine her.

She shook her head, her chest heaving harder than before as her eyes trailed down to my cock. I let a crooked smile take over my face.

“You’re gonna have to be a little more vocal than that, Romi.” I lined up my cock at her entrance and she squirmed under my hold.

“Corvin, I need this,” she whispered so softly that it was barely audible. “Please.”

“Are you ready?” I asked her, waiting for her green light.

I hitched one of her legs up over my hip and I pushed inside her velvety walls, soaking with her arousal but still so tight despite her just coming.

“You’re too tight. Fuck,” I hissed, nearly losing my mind from how she felt and I wasn’t even half way in yet.

She squirmed against me, her chest rising up and down and her eyes burning way too fucking bright from lust. I rubbed gentle circles on her clit, slickening it over with the mess between her legs. She sighed, relaxing into my touch again. I pushed in another inch deeper, soaking as much of my cock with her wetness as I could before pulling it out again.

“Oh God,” she moaned.

I kept the pace. Just burying myself a few inches at a time and pulling back out, driving her insane with need without hurting her.

“Please,” she begged, pulling me closer and raking her nails against my chest.

“You feel so fucking good,” I whispered pushing another inch deeper.

She let out a throaty moan and this time I kept going.

“Ah! Ah! Ah!” She cried out with every inch I sunk further inside of her.

“You’re doing so well, little lamb. I’m almost all the way inside.” I grasped her chin with my index finger and my thumb and I planted a wet kiss on her open mouth, bottoming out inside of her.

“Oh God,” she sobbed out.

I pulled out and thrusted deeper this time, my dick slick with her arousal and her mouth calling out to a deity I knew damn well she no longer believed in anymore.

“You call out God’s name one more time while I’m between your legs, even *he* won’t be able to save you, little lamb.” I pulled out almost completely before slamming into her with a punishing thrust.

She blinked up at me, something like stars in her eyes glimmered from my threat.

She was so fucking wet, all around me was the sound of our pleasure, borderline obnoxious and each collision a different song. I pinned her wrists above her head and moved in and out of her, first slowly but once she proved she wasn’t uncomfortable I lost any need to hold back. I lowered my mouth to her bra, exposing her nipple and taking it in. Swirling my tongue across the hardened bead, she moaned savage sounds into my ear.

“Oh G—” She stopped herself.

“Does that tight pussy hurt when my fat cock stretches it out like this?” I asked her and she wrapped her lips over her teeth, biting to contain her whimpers from falling out.

“Oh, fuck Romina, look how well you’re taking me.” I praised her, looking down to see where our bodies connected while I slid in and out of her.

She began to cry out and this time I sealed my lips over hers, swallowing the sounds of her climax to keep my brothers from hearing.

For now, they were all mine.

Her nails dug deep into my arm and her walls pulsed around my cock, pulling me deeper inside her while her muscles contracted from her orgasm.

I broke our kiss and she panted heavily under me while I continued to move inside her, slowly.

“Hang on,” I told her, flipping her over me so that I laid on the bed and she straddled my lap, my cock still buried deep inside her.

“Oh!” She gasped. “It’s like you’re bigger now.” She looked at me with eyes wide and I chuckled.

“Same size, little lamb.” I winked, grabbing her hips for leverage and pulling in and out of her with a new, faster, rhythm.

“Oh, Corvin,” she cried out, hands slapping down to my chest while she searched for something to hang on to.

The sounds of her moaning became distant and the buzzing in my ear grew louder. My breathing quickened and I shook my head side to side as I did my best to focus through the inevitable that I knew was coming.

“No. No,” I whispered to myself hoping she wouldn’t hear me.

But I was slipping, the tells too obvious for me to ignore.

“Hey. Come back.” Her voice called out a bit louder.

Then it was her lips on me, sweet like honeysuckle while her tongue tangled over mine, pulling me out of my head like a foggy daydream I couldn’t remember. All I could hear was the loud pumping of my own blood coursing through the chambers of my heart. Thump. Thump. It funneled straight into her like we were connected more than just from her being impaled onto my cock.

“Fuck,” I whispered, eyelids fluttering open to find her an inch over my face, still grinding and bouncing on my cock like she didn’t mind that I just went catatonic for a split second.

“There you are.” She smiled, tapping my cheek with her hand gently.

“Open that drawer.” I told her, directing my chin to the nightstand.

She pulled out the pair of silver handcuffs with a long black chain between both ends. She didn't question it, as if she could read my thoughts. I helped her get them fastened to the headboard, securing my left wrist to it.

"It's safer this way. In case it happens again," I told her.

"You came back though," she said softly like she really believed I could do it again.

I didn't.

She locked my right wrist, smiling with satisfaction at herself.

I jerked my hips up and pulled an unexpected cry from her, distracting her from the conversation and back to what mattered.

"Ride me," I commanded her and she bounced awkwardly up and down. "Lower down a bit, like you're going to lay on top of me." I guided her lower, "Hold on to me for leverage and move your hips."

She followed instructions like a fucking star, grinding and sheathing my cock with her molten, hot pussy with each bounce of her ass. Her hands squeezed against my pecs everytime she sunk down and I raised my hips to deepen the sensation inside of her.

"Touch yourself," I commanded and she shook her head, looking away from me in embarrassment as if I'd asked her for the impossible. "Touch yourself till you come, little lamb," I told her again, lacing my voice with a stern tone and she reached down.

Our eyes met and I held her gaze, feeling each surge of pleasure course from her through me as she worked herself into a frenzy.

She whimpered each time I thrusted up, but she didn't slow her movements, driving me insane while she clenched tightly around me. Her velvety walls were slick with desire, milking me as another orgasm crashed from inside her, nearly pulling me under with her. She cried 'no' repeatedly

when she came but she was on top and I was handcuffed so I didn't give it too much thought. I wasn't taking from her, she was giving it willingly.

Before I knew it, I was cursing her name out in low grunts while my release filled her up. I panted heavily, opening my eyes to find her staring at me with a giant grin on her face.

"Grab the keys would you?" I tilted my head to the nightstand.

"I don't know, I kind of like you like this." She teased, raising up slowly before coming down on my cock again.

I groaned, relishing the way her pussy gripped around me so perfectly, but now feeling frustrated and aching to reach out and touch her. She closed her eyes, dropping her head back while she used me to pleasure herself.

It was a fucking sight.

I took a mental picture just in case this was just one long black out dream.

"Romi." She slowly brought her head forward, an almost sinister smile painted on her face.

She was drunk with lust and it had never looked so good on anyone. She ground against me, shuddering in pleasure from the friction.

"Unlock me," I warned her.

She leaned forward as if she was about to unlock my right hand but instead she crashed back down on my cock, both of us groaning in sync.

"Unlock me little lamb," I growled out and she gave me a sheepish smile, becoming of her nickname.

"What if you hurt me?" She bit through her smile and stuck the key into the right cuff.

As soon as my wrist went free I reached out for her. A feral, possessive need to grab her and hold her took over and I clasped her left hand into the

now free cuff, joining her to me. She gave me those big wide eyes and I ran my free hand up her torso, grazing my fingers over the sensitive skin on her breast before pinching her nipples.

“Do you want me to hurt you?” I asked her, pushing myself up into a seated position with my cock still stuffed deep inside her.

“Sometimes.” She exhaled quietly.

“I’ll let Santorini handle that. I won’t ever hurt you Romina. Not again.” She seemed disappointed but it was the truth. I would end my own life before I ever hurt her again.

I grabbed the key and undid the handcuffs, wrapping my arms around her and pressing my lips to hers with my next thrust.

“More,” she moaned into my mouth.

I flipped her over with one swift movement, laying her flat on her stomach. She turned her head to the side to look back at me, just in time for me to see her eyes rolling as I filled her up from this position. Her legs were shut tightly so there was barely any room for my cock.

“Oh fuck,” I whispered, thinking of as many weird things as I possibly could to keep myself from coming again.

Hobbit’s feet. The shire. Sauron posing as an elf.

*All things Santorini would be gagging over.*

I almost choked out a laugh when the thought ran through my head.

“Please,” she whimpered and I reached under her, sliding my fingers between her thighs to torment her clit.

“I need you to come for me one more time, little lamb. I’m not going to make it much longer.”

I focused on her clit, swollen and throbbing but still giving it all the attention it deserved while plunging my cock inside her in slow, deliberate

strokes. I pressed my free hand to her back, pushing her down into the mattress further when I felt her walls tightening around me as if she was holding onto the orgasm like it would kill her.

“Do it Romina.”

She cried out confusing pleas to stop but her moans of despair were louder and more convincing. She quaked, tremors still flowing through her body underneath me. I brought both my hands to her hips, lifting her up just slightly so that I had better leverage. She looked like was cummed out, but she still moaned anytime my cock dove in a little deeper.

So I just went for it.

Drilling into her so hard she had no option but to hold onto the edges of the mattress to avoid being slung around. She buried her face into the sheets and screamed a carnal kind of song. I kept my pace, unrelenting until I came again, this time pulling out and coating her ass with thick ropes of hot cum.

I crashed down next to her, breathing laboriously in sync while sticky from sweat. After catching my breath, I got up and went to the bathroom, got a washcloth and soaked it with warm water. I wiped my cum off of her before laying back down.

I pulled her down into my chest and rolled us both to our sides, so that we were facing each other.

“Are you satisfied yet? Or shall I continue to fuck your brains out?” I asked, pressing my still hard erection into the space where her thighs touched.

She looked down like her cheeks were on fire and she couldn’t bear to look up at me, regardless of all the filthy things I had just done to her.

“Look at me.” I brought my index finger under her chin and lifted her so her gaze couldn’t stray from mine. “There’s no one like you.”

“I don’t know if that’s a good thing,” she whispered.

I kissed her again, this time soft and full of all the things I was feeling but didn’t know how to say. Didn’t know if I could say. Her hand was hot against my chest while our tongues pressed against each other tenderly. I broke away, dropping my forehead to hers before deciding to speak again.

“You pulled me out,” I told her.

“What?”

“I was blacking out. I heard your voice. It pulled me out,” I told her and she smiled.

“I dreamt this,” she said, and I looked at her curiously. “Not exactly like this, but pretty close. A few things were different. I think that’s why I knew it had to be you. I’d already done it once.”

“Hmm.” I thought about what she was saying.

“You don’t believe me?” she asked, with a hurt tone to her voice.

“Now why the hell would you think that?” I asked and she shrugged. “Do you have dreams like that often?”

“I never remembered my dreams before… before you three,” she said, as if that was a landmark in her life. “It’s always the same dream.”

“What happens?” I asked.

“It’s different bits and pieces, I’m drowning, something keeps me from being able to come up for air and pulls me under.” She looked up at me, a fearful look glazed over her eyes.

“Well, don’t worry about that, little lamb. I’ll keep you far away from that lake.” I kissed the top of her head, reassuring her. “You should go back

to Felix’s room now. Neither of them will like it if they find you here.” I tucked a stray hair behind her ear, and she nodded in agreement.

More than that I needed time to wrap my head around the chaotic cluster of thoughts bouncing around in my brain. I had literally just promised her I’d never be able to love her, and wouldn't be able to feel anything more for her than friendship.

I already knew I was a fucking liar.

I loved her far more than I’d ever be able to love myself.

Maybe that was okay too.

I woke up with a smile on my face and the lingering scent of vanilla and strawberries on my pillow. It made me wish I had let her stay the night and dealt with the consequences as they came. The minute my eyes opened, I decided this wasn’t a secret I would keep from my brothers.

I would have much rather have woken up with my nose buried in the nook of her neck and her legs wrapped around mine. Naked and tangled in each other. But instead, here I was, alone and with a hard-on.

*Again*.

Better than most times though. I smiled to myself, recounting the previous night. I pulled out a pair of gray sweatpants and stepped into them before leaving my room to find Sonny and Felix already eating on the kitchen island. Our little lamb, nowhere in sight.

Probably still in bed, tuckered out.

Let it be known that I was at least a decent fuck.

Most twenty year olds probably diddled a clit like an old guitar.

“Your little pet told me last night that neither of you had fucked her,” I said gathering both of their attention immediately.

They turned to face me.

“I’m surprised you had the self-restraint to leave her a virgin.”

“Really?” Sonny said flatly like he was more annoyed than anything.

“What? Is she not?” I asked knowing damn well that she wasn’t anymore.

“Has she been fucked by a cock? No.” Sonny walked towards me with a ‘matter-of-fact’ way about him as he continued, “Is her hymen intact?” His smile spread from ear to ear reminiscent of a Cheshire Cat. “Also no.”

“But the reality is that the question itself is repulsive and abhorrent. I refuse to entertain it, let alone glorify it by pretending like the construct of virginity isn’t a thing fabricated by the very same puritan men we despise and hope to bring down some day. The fact you spent a minute of your life wondering about how virginal the girl whose life Frollo robbed might be—is weak as fuck on your part.”

“Jesus dude.” My brother huffed from his seat on the island.

“I’m just saying, if a lesbian never had the misfortune of fucking a dude. Would she die a virgin in your eyes?” he asked both of us and I shrugged.

“Okay, okay, point made. I’m an ignorant ass.” I crossed my arms and he turned on his heels to walk away. “Doesn’t matter either way, cuz I fucked her last night.”

I don’t know if it was my words that pissed him off or the smile that was glued to my face, but either way I could have basked in the moment longer

if he had let me. But his fist met with my nose, and I groaned out painfully, clutching it from the impact.

“You did what?” Felix asked, a deep V formed in between his eyebrows, and he hopped off the barstool.

“Not to say she was practically begging me, but she was practically begging me. You fuckers were doing a number on her.” I shrugged and Sonny bawled his fist into my shirt, twisting it and bringing me closer to him.

“Did it not occur to you that you could have seriously hurt her?” His other fist was balled to his side like he was still trying to decide whether or not he was going to let it fly into my face again.

“You mean, the way you hurt her every night?” I asked, not hiding my annoyed tone of disbelief.

“I don’t do anything she doesn’t want or can’t handle.”

“Did you not think that maybe there was a reason neither of us had done it yet?” Felix pinched the space above his nose like he was too frustrated to think straight.

“I didn’t realize what I did with my body was now a group decision.” Her voice carried into the room before she appeared.

“I didn’t realize that both of you were children who needed to be watched every second of the day. Do you know how hard it’s going to be to get Plan B on this short notice?” Sonny gritted out through his teeth.

Fuck.

“Plan B?” she asked, looking at Felix and taking her chance with the kinder of the two angry men who stood in front of her.

“Yeah, to make sure you don’t get pregnant. Because knowing my brother he hasn’t used his dick in so long he probably didn’t even think

about wrapping it up.” Felix’s nostrils flared and I narrowed my eyes at him for the unnecessary dumping of my personal life.

He was fucking right though and now we were putting ourselves at risk for breaking the law. Arlan wasn’t going to take pity on us over an abortion.

“Were you really stupid enough to take this kind of chance?” He pulled at the front of my shirt, bunching it up in his hand to pull me closer to him.

“Fuck. I get it. I’ll make some calls,” I said, pulling out my phone and thumbing through to find Dera’s number.

“Talk to me,” she chirped on the other end of the line.

“I need a favor,” I told her, pulling the phone in closer and walking away from the judgmental eyes of my brother and my best friend.

“What kind of favor?” She popped some bubblegum loudly.

“The Plan B kind.”

“Well, well, well. Was it that pretty little thing you brought around here?” She got way too comfortable too quickly, every damn time.

“Dera.” I warned.

“It’ll take me a couple days, but I can get it.” She smacked her gum loudly between her words.

“No, I need it today. This morning, preferably.” I looked over my shoulder to see every eye in the room still following me.

“That’s gonna cost you,” she said like she probably already had the box on her.

“Doesn’t everything?”

“Meet me at the shop in an hour.” She clicked the phone off.

“We’re good. Dera’s shop in an hour.” I pocketed my phone and grabbed the keys off the counter.

“Where the fuck do you think you’re going?” Sonny said with a chuckle of disbelief.

“Um. To the—What do you mean?” I didn’t try to hide my confusion.

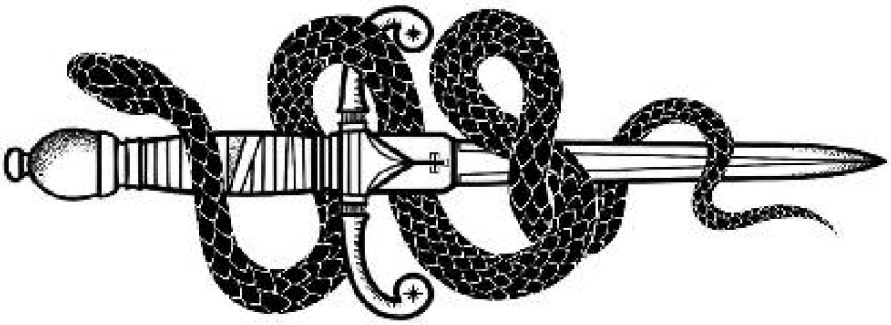
“You’re fucking insane if you think I’m gonna let you handle this. You’ve done enough. Eat some food Romina, I’ll be back for you in an hour.” He looked her up and down before grabbing the keys from my hands.

Fuck it.

Maybe I deserved it.

But I definitely didn’t regret it.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

I did my best to be in and out of the Court but Dera had a mouth on her and once she started, it was damn near impossible for her to stop. Arlan called me, asking me to stop by the Palace to pick up the safe he kept there. An odd ask, but nothing too out of the ordinary for the old fucker. He was so accustomed to everyone serving his every demand.

The Palace of Justice was a strip club his daughter Korina had owned, and when she disappeared and was eventually declared dead, all the rights passed to him. But Arlan Black distanced himself from it, doing nothing but funneling whatever the club needed to keep going without making any effort to be involved in its operations at all.

So when he called me, asking me to head over there to grab the safe from the club, I knew that we were dealing with some old secrets he wanted to out before he croaked. Now I was finally back from his little errand, we could focus on what actually mattered.

“Take this.” I put the pill in front of her with a glass of water.

“What is it?” she asked.

“It’s what’s going to keep you from becoming the mother of the next Escura kid. Are you ready to be a mom?” I asked her and she wrinkled her nose at the idea.

She picked up the pill and swallowed it, chasing it with the water.

“Why did Dera text me saying she saw you coming out of the Palace?” Corvin asked, with a shit starting smirk on his face.

He wanted to eat my fist again, and he wanted it bad.

“The Palace?” Romina asked me, before looking over to Corvin.

“It’s a strip club.” Felix added from the couch, and she pulled her phone out to google it.

Her face did a quirky little twist like she wasn’t sure what to think about whatever she was discovering at that moment.

“This is normal? Places where people go for naked dancing?” she asked, putting her phone down.

“Hmm, what’s normal? What are you thinking?” I asked her, narrowing my eyes like if I brought my eyelids any further together I’d be able to fucking see through her and actually read her mind like I so desperately desired to.

“I-I’m not sure,” she said, wringing the fabric of her little goth skirt into her hands.

A skirt no doubt picked out directly by Corvin, specifically to draw my attention.

“Don’t lie to me.” I reminded her which one of us she was talking to and she fixed her posture.

“There’s a part of me that feels… sad. I think?” she said like she wasn’t sure. “Sad that you keep me here and in your bed but would still decide to

go do whatever it is you would want to do around other naked women. But not with me.” She takes a breath for much longer than I want to wait before she finishes. “But there’s also a part of me that wonders if I’d very much like to look at other naked men.” She finishes unexpectedly.

“What the hell?” Corvin shouted like this had steered into territory he wasn’t prepared for, closing in on her from the opposite direction. “Look here little lamb, I’m only going to say this once.” He fixed her chin in his grip and turned her gaze to him. “If you so much as look at another man, you can consider it his death warrant. If another man looks at you, I’ll rip his head off with my bare hands and make you watch. If you let someone who isn’t the three of us touch you? I’ll split them open from throat to dick so slow they’ll die three times before their heart finally stops beating. Do you understand?” he asked her and she bit her bottom lip like she was fighting back a smile.

“Say you understand, little lamb.” He waited for her. “Say you’re ours.”

“I understand, I’m yours,” she repeated back but then looked around the room, “So, you will also not look at other women?” she asked the question not to one of us specifically but all of us.

Felix grinned like a fox before sauntering over to her.

“Mina, You’re the only girl I see,” he murmured into her ear but it was loud enough for us to hear.

Her eyes met Corvin’s.

“Don’t look at me, I’m not the one who went there.” He lifted his chin up like he’d already declared his feelings without so much as saying the exact words.

Her eyes moved over to me like she was waiting for me to assure her.

“Don’t be jealous, Pet.” I closed in on her, finally gracing her with the nickname for the first time in a long while and seeing the physical reaction it gave her.

I smoothed my hand over her soft hair. “It was just business.” She looked confused. “Arlan sent me there to pick up something for him. The place belongs to him, he’s got unfinished business.”

“He’ll be gone soon.” Felix exhaled, pulling Romina away from me and sitting her on his lap.

“Even Arlan Black knows he has to die someday. He’s reaching the end.” I looked over to her. “Get your shoes on. We’re going somewhere.”

She didn’t bother to hesitate or ask questions, she just hopped away to oblige.

“We’re running out of time,” I told them both and they answered me with a nod. I had Felix fill Corvin in on who Romina truly was, he was pissed but promised to let me tell her on my own terms.

She came back out of the room wearing high-waisted black shorts, two sets of buttons going down the middle. She wore fishnet stockings underneath and platform boots with buckles going up the sides. She was wearing a baggy black sweater on top and some jewelry decorated her fingers and her neck. That damn holster. I couldn’t even look at that knife without thinking about the last time I’d used it on her.

I opened my fist, the wound on the palm of my hand not yet healed.

She might not have known what she was doing when she put these little outfits together, but whatever it was, she was she’s fucking doing it to me. I held back a throaty sound before I gestured my head towards the door to compel her out.

“Where are we going?”

“To make sure this doesn’t happen again. Grab a drink, it’s a long drive,” I told her and she frowned.

She grabbed a water bottle from the table but pranced over to Felix who draped his arms over her in an embrace.

“Hurry back,” he said in a hushed tone, but loud enough that I could hear.

He rubbed his nose against her and she kept the smile from forming on her face before waving to Corvin and following me out.

The drive to what was left of Grimm’s Reach was intolerable but it was the only city in the area with a doctor who still had access to birth control. Most medical professionals fought against all the changes to women’s rights when it came to bodily autonomy, but once the church took control they were faced with losing their license, or complying with the changes.

Lolita Escura had been the example though, and nobody wanted to end up like her. The few who wanted to do better, took the risks.

In secret.

I’d spent the ride explaining what we were doing to her so that there would be no surprises as far as I could predict. Aside from answering her questions about why the church cared whether or not women did or didn’t want to have babies, we rode mostly in silence. The overwhelming pressure of the things unspoken between us just created more and more tension as the drive grew longer.

The GPS had no problem finding the middle of nowhere road Dera had written down. I just had to hope the rest of the written directions were right otherwise I'd be fucked up a creek if we got lost all the way out here.

Just when I started wondering if I was going to have to call her, a slew of barbed wire fencing appeared in the distance. The gravel road turned to a dirt path and multiple houses, contained within what looked like prison grounds, began to appear. I pulled into the entrance and the first gate rolled up automatically. Motorcycle club compounds made me itch.

It slammed down heavily behind the car, keeping us trapped from going further and unable to leave. The speaker box buzzed outside of my window and a voice blew out.

"State your business," they said.

"We're here to see Dr. Emory O'Connor," I answered into the box.

"There's no one here by that name, turn back." The box cut out and the back gate began to roll up once again.

"Her daughter sent me," I said and the gate froze.

It dropped down heavily again before another buzzer sounded out obnoxiously and the gate in front of us slid automatically to the side.

I anxiously pulled my car up to the biggest house in the compound, parking next to the lineup of motorcycles. I wasn't supposed to say her name, unless shit really went south, but hopefully she wouldn't mind. It didn't look like they were going to give me another chance to even plead a case to come in had I not name dropped her.

A big guy looking like he was in his mid-fifties came stomping through double doors of the farmhouse-style home. His heavy boots creaked with each step he took while he made his way down the front porch.

“I dunno why you’re here pendejo, but the rules are different around these parts. You don’t get to barge into our very, *very* delicate ecosystem and come fuck shit up for us with whatever rich puto shit you’ve got going on,” he said eyeing me up and down while toying with the glock in his hand like my outfit was a dead giveaway.

“I’m not here to cause trouble.” I raised my hands up in the air as a show of good faith and Romina mimicked me nervously.

“If you weren’t here to cause trouble then the first word out your mouth shouldn’t have been Desidera’s name.” He scowled. “Get your ass inside, and don’t mention the president’s daughter again unless you wanna lose your tongue.”

“Calaveras,” A female voice called from inside. “Let the kids in.”

She cut his amusement short and I held back a smirk. I liked toying with danger, but this dude was at least six foot seven and I didn’t drive all this way for a beatdown. We followed her in, and she led us down a set of stairs to a life-sized replica of a hospital room. From the shiny white floors to the smell of recently sprayed bleach wafting in the air, I could have mistaken it for the real thing… had I not come in through the saloon style double doors,

There was a faint beeping of a heart monitor, and a curtain was pulled around one of the beds, letting me know there was another patient in here with us. The doctor turned quickly on her heels to face us.

“So, what do you need, Son of Satan?” She read my eyebrow like it was a joke between the two of us.

“Birth control.” I narrowed my eyes and pushed Romina forward.

The red-headed doctor raised an eyebrow before speaking.

“Must be nice. It’s not cheap,” she muttered, reaching into a cabinet.

“Must be. Can’t imagine what life was like before all of this went to shit.” I reminded her we were living in the filth of her generation.

I tossed the envelope, with a fat stack of cash inside it, down on the hospital bed.

She was looking at me with nothing but judgment in her eyes, like whatever she thought she knew about me from just how I looked, was leaving a bad taste in her mouth. It didn’t matter. It didn’t hurt my feelings. None of this was my fault, people just wanted someone else to blame.

“Just get on the bed, so I can get you both the fuck out of here,” she said with a biting snark.

“You’ll do it?” Romina spoke for the first time, her voice so sweet like a flower petal blowing through the wind.

“I don’t deny women the ability to choose what they do with their bodies. Regardless of whether or not they come knocking on my door with a jackass wearing that tattoo on their face and my daughter’s name in their mouth.”

“I take it you’re not on good terms.”

“Tell Desidera her father is looking for her. *Still.*” She filled a syringe and tapped on the vile with her fingernails. “This will sting just a bit.”

“Do you want to know where she is?” I asked but the doctor shook her head.

“No. Leave me out of it. She’s broken my heart enough.” She grabbed Romina’s bicep and jabbed the needle into the inside of her arm.

“Ah!” Romina gasped and instinctively recoiled for a second but relaxed for the doctor to finish.

“This is to numb your arm,” she explained. “Now I’m going to insert the device under the skin. You can distract her to make it easier.” She side-eyed

me like my mere existence annoyed her.

“What’s your problem with me? If you don’t want me here, why help me?” I asked her, not fighting the scowl forming on my face.

“I don’t like entitled little boys with daddy’s money who waste it however they can instead of putting it towards fixing the shithole world we live in. But if I can stop you from procreating, I’ll take it as a win,” she said, like she was so much better than me.

“I don’t have *daddy’s* money. It was my mom’s. And it’s the world *you* created.” I reminded her and she scoffed.

“I’ve had as much say in this as you have, Santorini.” She spat my name out, shocking me that she knew exactly who I was. “I’m not going to refuse her care just because I think you’re a foul little shit.”

She pressed a trigger into the machine she’d been holding, and Romina let out a surprised grunt.

“You don’t fucking know me,” I grumbled and she let out a laugh.

“I know exactly who you are. Little boys like you grow up to be the same kind of men who destroyed our future.” She wrapped Romina’s arm with a bandage, covering the gauze tightly.

“You don’t know shit. I’m nothing like them.” I looked away, angry at the idea that I might one day end up exactly like the man who raised me. “Your hands aren’t so clean either. A place like this takes a lot of money to keep going. I wonder how you all do it,” I said menacingly but she didn’t care for my shit, ignoring me as if I'd never spoken at all.

“Any questions?” she asked Romina who shook her head, so I went for it instead.

“How are you still getting these anyway?” I couldn’t deny that I was curious as hell.

“I have a colleague in Canada who ships me the expired ones they can’t administer anymore. That’s why two years only, I can’t guarantee it’ll work as well after the second year, after that the risk is on you. Come find me again then.” She was telling Romina, not me.

“And if you’re not here?” I asked.

“Well, if I’m dead then I guess you’ll have to YouTube how to get it out.” She shrugged as if it were no concern to her. “That’s why I’m not doing IUD’s anymore.” She pulled her gloves off and gave Romina a pill.

“That’s just in case it gets too sore, you should be alright though. Expect some bruising. Your periods may get a bit irregular, they might even go away all together.” She told her in a professional tone before shooting that vicious glare at me again. “Now take your fuck toy and get out of my house before my husband comes home.”

“I’m not here to piss off any Diablos.” My upper lip peeled up involuntarily. “And I’m grateful, despite what an insufferable—”

“Thank you.” Romina told her, grabbing her hand with both of hers.

The doctor smiled, softening her gaze while it was directed at my pet.

The ride home was twice as long, with even more things lingering between us than ever before.

“Why did that doctor hate you so much?” she asked without turning her head to look at me.

I gave her the same courtesy.

“Probably for the same reasons that you do, Pet.” I sighed, not hiding my exhaustion at the subject.

“I don’t hate you,” she mumbled, looking down like she wasn’t sure if she wanted me to hear the words.

“Well, maybe that’s your fault then.” I told her, this time burning my gaze through her until I nearly wrecked the car and she was forced to look up at me.

“Would you prefer it if I did?” She asked, rubbing the bandage on her arm.

“It would be easier, wouldn’t it?” I gritted out through clenched teeth and she mulled it over like she was giving it some thought.

I dropped my hand to her thigh without thinking, the soft feel of her skin under my palm reminded me that everything was wrong between us. I regretted it immediately. Wanting to touch her, reach out to her at all times was fucking consuming and now I couldn’t fucking take it back otherwise she’d know that I made a mistake. I didn’t make mistakes.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Fuck.

We were maybe halfway home when she begged me to pull over. She opened the door hurriedly, throwing up her breakfast on the side of the road. I pulled out my phone to google the side effects of the plan B pill and… shit. There they were. I could be such a dick sometimes.

“You okay, Pet?”

“I don’t feel good.”

“Come lay down in the back.” I opened the door and helped her in.

I stopped at a nearby gas station to get her a bottle of water. She didn’t throw up again by the time we got back to the chapel, but she didn’t look any less miserable for the rest of the ride.

“I’m sorry,” I told her, helping her out and leaving the car parked in front of the chapel and bracing myself from the backlash of her two guard dogs

that waited inside.

The next day, Arlan had decided I had procrastinated enough and we were finally faced with the meeting he'd demanded. He'd had enough of my excuses.

"I told you that your presence was demanded. Arlan's decided that today is the day. He wants to meet you." I told Romina.

"I don't understand why?" she asked suspiciously.

"He practically raised us, you can imagine he's curious to meet who we're spending all of our time with," I said without looking up from my computer while I finished typing up an email.

"When?"

"Now. Are you dressed?" I asked again without looking up.

I had known about it for days but I was worried that telling her would only bring up more questions I couldn't answer. She was nervous around new people and I didn't want the anticipation of it all to overwhelm her. I thought maybe it would be best this way.

"I don't know, can you look at me and see for yourself?" She challenged me and I fought the urge to grin.

Maybe I'd been worried for nothing. Now that she was comfortable around us, who knew what she could handle?

She'd grown brave.

And she'd wreck us all the minute he'd give her everything that was owed to her because she'd leave us. Why wouldn't she? Why would she stay here when she could have money, any life she wanted, with whoever she wanted?

What use would we have to her then?

I looked up, having to clench my teeth harder than I'd ever done in my entire life to keep from giving myself away with a rogue expression.

Fuck it all.

She was breathtaking.

She was datura, blooming in the pitch black while her vines coiled around us, choking us with her invasion.

She was wearing protective motorcycle riding gear Corvin had bought for her, which meant they had planned to ride. The pants were tight and hugged her hips, enhancing every curve in her already beautiful body now that she was filling out from eating three meals a day. She zipped up the leather jacket and raised an eyebrow at me like she was waiting for me to tell her she couldn't ride with him.

I wouldn't give her the satisfaction.

She wouldn't know how badly it burned to want to keep her safe, without suffocating her and keeping her prisoner like that damned holy man. Nothing had hurt as much as when she compared me to him. I looked back down to my laptop, practically feeling her aura deflate at my lack of response.

"Oh good, Sonny already told you where we're riding to. Come be my little backpack," Corvin beckoned her and she pranced his way.

"Backpack?" she asked and he dropped his arm over her while they walked towards the door.

It was hard to fight the jealousy rising in my chest. Hard to fight the feelings that came with knowing that just a few weeks ago she was more scared of him than me, and now it had completely flipped.

Just as it should have.

She didn't know me then and now she saw me exactly for what I was.

Someone who destroys.

Who maims.

Who mars.

I closed my laptop and grabbed my keys, whistling loud enough to warn Felix that I was leaving.

"You seem more uptight than usual," he said, getting into the passenger seat of the Audi.

I grumbled something while turning up the music and pulling out of the campus parking lot. My mind was a clusterfuck of chaotic thoughts all spinning around the same damn thing.

Her.

I couldn't let him be the one who told her. It felt too wrong.

"Fuck!" I slammed my hands against the steering wheel and called Corvin.

"Pull over," I told him and hung up.

"What are you doing?" Felix asked me.

"He's going to tell her. I can't let her find out this way," I told him, seeing where Corvin had pulled off and they both waited on the side of the road.

She was perched on his bike, smiling at him. She looked so carefree. So natural on her face and I didn't feel better about the fact I'd be the one to ruin it. I barely turned the car off before I unbuckled and jumped out of it.

“I can’t let him be the one who tells you. He doesn’t even fucking know you,” I told her and she frowned at me.

“Who? Tell me what?”

“Arlan Black,” I told her, Felix got out of the car as well and Corvin scratched the back of his head and kicked away from his bike. “He’s gonna tell you, and you deserve to hear it from someone you know.”

“Tell me what?” she asked again, the V creasing into the middle of her forehead even deeper.

“Arlan. He’s your grandfather.”

She looked dumbstruck. Like I’d sucked all the air out of her lungs.

“H-how is that possible?” She glanced around at all three of us, waiting to see who would answer first.

“Your mother, her name was Korina Black. She disappeared nineteen years ago. She was Arlan Black’s daughter. The same man who raised me.”

I could see the destruction happening inside her.

“Take me home, Corvin.” Her voice was so devoid of emotion I hardly recognized it.

He looked at me but when I stared at the blank expression on her face, I knew I had no right to ask anything of her, let alone demand it. Arlan would have to wait. I nodded to him and they both got back on the bike.

I kicked a pile of dirt before crouching on the ground and letting out a throaty yell.

*OceanofPDF.com*

The drowning was happening inside my own mind. I couldn't tell how long it took to get back to the chapel. All of a sudden I was there, sitting on the couch again with three men gazing down at me.

They were waiting for me.

Waiting for me to say something, to tell them that I was okay.

But I wasn't.

I didn't think I would ever be okay again.

This was the closest I'd ever gotten to know who I was, where I came from. And in the end the only men I trusted had known the whole time. Was I a sick joke to every person who passed me around? Had they planned this with Frollo from the beginning?

"I-I need air." I stood up and they surrounded me, "I need to be alone…I think." I refused to meet any of their gazes.

The oxygen felt thick surrounding us and I couldn't face any of them. Not right now. I knew looking at them would only put cracks in my resolve

and I'd crumble. I knew I couldn't hold my own against any of them, let alone all three of them.

I needed to feel my rage and I needed to go through it without any of them trying to talk me into reason. I didn't need a reason.

What did it ever do for me before?

I left them arguing about whether or not I should be going out alone and grabbed my leather jacket before quietly exiting the chapel. I knew it wouldn't be long before they noticed my absence so I took off running as fast as I could, hoping that maybe Corvin would fight for me to have this time to myself.

I was saying it in my head that I needed to be alone but my feet took me in a dreadful direction. I dragged in heavy swallows of air, my hands on my knees as I stood in front of the grand cathedral.

I looked back before entering, still not seeing any of the boys and for some reason feeling it like a hot blade against my chest. I walked through the large golden halls and climbed up the grand spiral stairs that led to the east wing.

"F-father Frollo," I said quietly at the open door of his chambers.

He glared at me, his loathing too visible to pretend like it didn't sting.

I suddenly didn't know why I was here anymore.

In my head, every reason, every thought, had previously made sense, but now that I stood in front of him, for the first time in months, staring at the man I so badly wanted to be my father in some way. All I could feel was a deep emptiness where seeds of resentment were threatening to grow.

Why had I brought myself here? To this self-serving man who claimed he was righteous but left me in that tower to rot? I had been aching for

answers, but now that I was close to the source of all my pain and hatred, all I felt was the scars of my past burning open.

“Filthy, heathen whore. Why are you here? Is it not enough that you parade yourself all over campus like a vile succubus?”

“I came because there are things I need to know, Father Frollo.” I spoke softly, not bothering to raise my head to meet his eyes.

He’d stripped me of the confidence to do that long ago.

“Father.” He spat out with distaste. “I wasted years on you girl. And for what?” He poured the blood of Christ into a golden chalice and sloppily drank it down, the red liquid staining his chin as it dripped onto his priestly robes.

“I don’t understand.” I shook my head.

“Of course you don’t. You’re too stupid to understand anything. Not my fault certainly, I did everything I could for you.” I glanced upward to catch the sneer displayed on his face as if my existence had truly been so intolerable to him.

“Sister Sophia,” he shouted out towards the hallway and I backed up slowly away from him.

“W-what are you doing?” I asked him nervously.

“What you came here for dear child. I’m going to rid you of your heathen ways. Cleanse the impurity from your filthy soul.”

“That’s not why I came here,” I said, backing up just as Sister Sophia appeared behind me.

“Sister Sophia, the heathen whore has just confessed she fears she may have succumbed to a demonic possession. We must take action and free this poor wretch.”

“No I didn’t!” I shouted just as Father Frollo towered over me, grabbing my wrists into his hands and overpowering me.

“Take no heed Sister, it is the demon talking. Prepare the cellar. Tell no one.”

I kicked at him, screaming at the top of my lungs and cursing his name with every foul word I’d learned from the men who’d been living with me. He smirked, nodding over to Sister Sophia as if I was only confirming his accusations.

She turned on her heels to comply, ignoring my pleas for help.

“What are you going to do?” I yelled.

“Save your mortal soul, you foolish girl.” He grabbed a chunk of hair from the side of my head and sent me flying into the wall headfirst.

And then everything went dark.

I felt the cold, rough surface against my back first, before I’d even opened my eyes. The pain throbbing from the side of my head was strong enough to let me know it wasn’t water slowly dripping down my scalp that I felt. I groaned, aching to stretch before realizing that my feet and hands were bound. My legs were tied together, and something kept them secured to the rock.

I opened my eyes, hissing at the pain in my head. Candles lined the walls, not providing much light at all in the massive room though there were probably hundreds of them. My hands were tied above my head, and I

couldn’t see what kept me in place. I was on top of a massive stone, covered in what felt like thick moss. In fact, it seemed like everything around me was rock, even lining the walls of wherever we were.

“Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus.” I heard him chanting not too far from me. “Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis.”

I groaned, wiggling against the stone and feeling the slimy moss underneath me.

“Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine.” I could hear an older woman’s voice join in with his chanting, making the pain in my head even worse.

She was ancient, her gray hair peaked through her habit as she circled me, sprinkling holy water over me despite my yells to let me go. It was Sister Sophia.

“Why are you doing this?” I begged but they didn’t stop.

“Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus.” He began again without a moment's break. “Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis.” I pulled against the ropes with no success, feeling angrier by the second.

Angry at myself for thinking that anything good could have come of this. Mad that this was the man who was my parent. Regardless of what he said about it. None of us chose our parents, but my parent didn’t choose me either.

I was still wearing my clothes, which meant there was a good chance my knife was still in its holster, under my skirt. I just didn’t know how I was going to get to it.

“Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine.” It was becoming a shrill annoyance the more my wrists burned against the ropes from my wiggling in attempts to get loose. “Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus.”

“AHH!!” I screamed, thrashing against my restraints.

“You see now Sister? We musn’t stop until she’s cleansed,” he told her and she nodded blindly, unable to see that the only evil in the room was them. “Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis.”

On the seventh or eighth repetition I began to cackle, laughing at the hypocrisy of his own words. A scowl carved deep between his eyebrows.

“Crushed under the mighty power of GOD?” I cackled out in laughter after translating his latin prayers back at him and he threw the holy water directly in my face.

I laughed even harder. “What God? What God allows something like this to happen? What God decided you should live and I should suffer?” The realization was more for me than for him.

They went on, ignoring me and repeating the verses louder as if to drown out the sound of my mental breakdown.

Or was it mental clarity?

“Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine.” Sister Sophia finished for him, starting another round without taking a breath. “Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus.”

“I’ll cut this demon out of you if I have to, girl. I fought too hard to keep you pure for it to all be wasted.”

I cackled wildly again, knowing it would provoke him.

His palm struck against my face, the metallic taste of my blood trickled over my tongue but I bared my teeth at him instead after licking it off my lips.

“Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis. Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine. Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus.”

“Why did you keep me locked away?” I sobered up my laughing to ask, the real reason I’d come here to begin with, I would at least get the answers I’d come seeking if I was going to suffer for them regardless.

“Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus. Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis. Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine.” He rejoined Sister Sophia.

“ANSWER ME!” I yelled, jerking the restraints and only dishing out more pain to myself. “AHHH!” I screamed from the top of my lungs, but they both continued as If I were the deranged one here.

Eventually my screams turned into tears, and then my sobs turned into quiet cries.

“Four more hours, Sister Sophia, every day until the demon is gone. Nothing but water until then,” he told her before giving me his back and making his way out of… wherever we were.

“Father Frollo,” I screamed but he didn’t answer and eventually disappeared.

Sister Sophia took slow steps towards me. Her fingers dipped into the wooden bowl, and she sprayed me with holy water again. I growled at her, angry that this woman was following the archbishop without question.

“Let me go.” I tried to reason with her.

“Quiet demon.”

“There is no demon.”

“I’ve seen you, with all of those men. Demon. Whore of Babylon. Succubus.” She scowled, sprinkling me with the holy water once more.

“Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus,” she began again.

I took a deep breath, trying to find a happy place to go to while I came to terms with the fact that I might be suffering for a lot longer than mentally possible. She went on, and on, and… on. Repeating the prayer until I thought her voice would surely go out.

But the old crone was resilient. I closed my eyes, flashes of the last few weeks playing in my memory, reminding me that this was all my fault. There had been not just one, but three people who cared for me and I left them to walk straight into the mouth of the fire.

“Exorcizamus te, immundissime spiritus. Satanicae potestatis. Vade, satana, creator et magister deceptionis. Sub magna Dei potentia opprimitur; contremiscite et flete. Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine— How did you get down here?” She yelled out in surprise and I jarred my eyes open.

“Through brute force.” I couldn’t see him in the dark yet, he was too far away.

But the honeyed smooth sound of his voice was unmistakable.

“Mr. Escura you are to leave immediately.” Her voice was shrill and coated in anger as if she knew she had no authority over him.

“Where is Frollo?” Felix asked her.

“The headmaster has been called away.”

“Step aside Sister,” he said with a warning tone.

“You are interrupting official church business Mr. Escura, I could have you removed from the grounds for this and even expelled.” He stepped

closer, his face still draped in shadows.

“Sister, I’m not going to warn you again, step aside. I have a strict policy against harming women, but you are standing in between me and the only thing I care about in this entire world.”

Sister Sophia stepped back fearfully. Each time Felix came closer she went further away until she’d eventually put enough distance between us all that she scurried back the same way Father Frollo had come from like the rat she was.

“We need to go.” He looked at me with pity in his eyes before cutting my restraints.

Felix had always looked at me with marvel and wonder.

Now the magic had been broken, and he saw that I was pathetic, covered in weakness. Someone who could easily be ripped apart by the angry claws of this world. I had always been covered in the scars Frollo had carved into me, but now he could finally see them. His eyebrows dropped and he scooped me up into his arms carrying me up the stairs and out of the cathedral.

“How did you find me so fast?” I rasped, clutching my throat. The screaming had done a number on my voice.

His eyebrows furrowed in the middle.

“It’s been fucking hours, Romina. I looked through every door in this damned church.” I burrowed into his neck.

I stopped crying sometime during the walk back through the chapel. My body turned cold and my teeth chattered when the nighttime breeze wrapped its tendrils around my bones. Felix pulled me closer into him, but he still hadn’t looked down to meet my gaze.

He didn’t lower me to the ground once we’d got back to the chapel, not until we made our way inside and he sat me down on the comfort of the couch. Sonny was there, pacing feverishly back and forth, only stopping to look down at me from scowling features.

He looked angrier than I could recall ever seeing him.

“Where was she?” He seethed, not asking me, or bothering to spare a glance my way.

“She went to Frollo.” Felix didn’t bother to lie to Sonny, knowing he’d have the truth someway or another.

“So why is she back here then?” He finally turned his hateful expression back to me.

I made myself smaller, wrapping my arms over my knees that pressed into my chest as I cowered into the corner of the couch. If Sonny was angry or tired of me then it was likely Frollo’s threats would be coming to fruition soon.

The only thing that had stood between me and Frollo’s callous ways was Sonny, but now as he stared down at me, the only thing showing through his expression was a generous amount of contempt.

All of it directed at me.

“I took care of you. I gave you sanctuary despite him wanting to throw you out like trash. I gave you what you needed but you still went to him. Regardless of me asking you not to. If you can’t trust me then leave, Romina.”

I covered my ears and buried my face into my thighs to hide myself from him.

“That doesn’t work with me,” he said, but I couldn’t will it inside me to turn my gaze up to meet his.

“Hey, just chill, she’s not doing so well.” Felix tried but was cut short by Sonny’s response.

“She trusted him over us.”

But that wasn’t true.

Was it?

“That’s not what happened!” I cried out, pulling Sonny’s attention back to me.

“No? You didn’t specifically ask me if you could talk to him? I didn’t tell you myself that nothing good would come of Claüde Frollo getting near you?” His voice raised with every word he spoke. “But you didn’t trust me. You had to see for yourself.” He was practically shouting, even though his demeanor didn’t allow for it. “Is that not what happened, Romina?”

“Sonny, you're scaring me.” I shrank down.

I let out a hearty sob and I let myself collapse under the weight of the truth. He was right, Frollo’s hold on me kept me unable to live and think independently for myself. I still secretly craved the cruelty he dished out because it was the closest thing to love that I ever knew. Even now, after everything, I was still desperate for a kind word from him, for something that would make all the pain worth it.

“I needed to know.” I sobbed between hiccupped breaths. “I needed to know why I was disposable. What it all had been for.”

His teeth clinked together with a snap.

“Get out,” he said, making my blood turn cold.

I’d broken what had already been cracked.

“What?” Felix said.

“Get out, Romina.” He pointed to the door, my bottom lip quivered as I did my best to fight back tears.

A losing game.

The same deafening silence muted everything just as it did before. I felt the walls closing in on me and my universe began to shrink down around me with the decisiveness of Sonny's words.

"You don't mean that Sonny. He doesn't mean that Mina," Felix reassured me softly, but Sonny's upper lip peeled up at his friend's attempt to soothe me.

"Don't speak for me. You can go as well if you think she deserves another second of our protection. If I see you again, you *will* regret it." He dropped the ultimatum like a heavy anchor, the expression on Felix's face was painful enough to tear my heart into pieces.

I wouldn't ask him to do that.

They began to argue and I stood on my own, not bothering to look back as I made my way out of the chapel. The rain began to trickle down slowly at first and I picked up my pace with it once the water dropped faster. I didn't understand how in just a matter of hours everything could have gone so wrong. I just needed to get to the dormitories, find Reesa.

She would help me.

*OceanofPDF.com*

By the time I made it to the dorms the rain was beating down in a violent cascade, almost bruising me with each heavy droplet against my skin. The door was locked, and Reesa sat behind a desk, her head laid down and her eyes closed. I didn't know where my phone was, there was a good chance it was in the chapel or it might have gotten left behind in the cathedral.

I didn't even know what time it was.

It was late, that's about as much as I knew.

I beat the back of my fist against the glass door, it took multiple tries but eventually she raised her head, her eyes going wide with recognition as she took me in. Reesa ran to me, opening the door and pulling me inside.

"What's going on? Why do you look like hell?" she asked, but I didn't answer.

I collapsed into her arms and did the only thing I knew how to do anymore these days.

I let my tears take over.

It wasn't enough. I wanted to drown in them. I needed to fill my lungs up with their salt until I choked, my muscles gave out and I went quietly into the darkness.

The urge to stop existing was dragging me down into a pit of hopelessness that I knew I wasn't strong enough to climb out of. So I clung to the only other person I knew wouldn't hurt me in this entire world.

"Hey, hey hey." She smoothed down my hair and held onto me, the sound of my wailing cries drowning her out so that I could barely hear her. "What happened, Mina?" She used Felix's nickname for me, and a feral sob left my throat.

"Okay, Okay." She tried to calm me down, she looked around nervously before pulling me all the way inside. "Let's get you to my room, okay?" she said softly and I nodded, hiccupping between cries that made their way out of my chest uncontrollably.

She swiped her card in the elevator and held me tightly against her while the numbers slowly decreased and the doors dinged open. Inside, the numbers took twice as long to climb before we reached the number four. She ushered me out and pulled me along until she stood at her door.

"It's messy in there, and I have a few more hours downstairs at my post before I switch shifts with the other RA, but you'll be okay in here. I have drinks in the minifridge and there's snacks in the drawer next to my bed." I stood awkwardly while she showed me where everything was. "Here's the remote, don't open the door for anyone unless it's me. Okay?" She waited for my answer, I must have barely moved my head with my nod, but she seemed satisfied enough to accept it.

It was tiny, a smaller bed than any of the boys had in their rooms was elevated and underneath it was a desk. There was a couch on the opposite side and screen hanging on the wall above the desk. I took the remote from her, but she raised her eyes at me suspiciously.

“What happened?” she asked.

“I-I-I don’t know.” I shook my head, still not sure if I even knew what had happened myself. “Sonny told me to get out.” My sentences were still broken from the hiccups I couldn’t fight away.

“Let me see if I can get someone to cover for me right now. Don’t move,” she said, her eyes giving me a sympathetic look before she turned back and left the room.

I knew well the sound of the key turning the lock before her footsteps faded away. I didn’t move, I just waited.

I was good at waiting.

“Oh God, Romina!” I heard Reesa, unsure how I missed the sound of her unlocking the door before she came in. “Your lips are purple. Take off those wet clothes, I’ll start a bath for you.” She pushed me towards the bathroom and turned on the tub.

“Do you want to tell me what happened?” Reesa said softly from the doorway, and I shook my head, not sure what there was to say.

“Maybe acting like a normal person for a night will help get your mind off of it,” she said and I frowned. “No offense. Those guys just kind of treat

you like you’re made of glass.”

I didn’t respond, we stayed quiet for a while and her nervousness showed. She bit the skin around her nail and only stopped when her phone buzzed. She picked it up, moving her thumb quickly before her face lit up.

“There’s a party on the second floor.” She raised her eyebrows like she was up to no good.

I knew the look. Corvin wore it well.

Once I got out of the tub all I wanted to do was lay in bed for the next six thousand years, but she insisted on getting me dressed. She put me in a bright red dress with thin straps that hugged my body from top to bottom, though the bottom ended right below my butt.

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” I asked her, staring at myself in the mirror, slightly appalled at how odd I looked in such contrasting color.

Black was much more suited to me.

“They’ve just been dressing you up like Wednesday Adams at the Met Gala over there, some color is good.”

“I really don’t think I like it,” I told her truthfully with a sour tone to my voice. “Maybe I could just stay here and you can go?” She flattened her lips into a line of disapproval.

“Look, those guys have already pissed all over you in front of the whole campus. No one's gonna mess with you. Let’s go have fun, be normal for a night before you turn back into a pumpkin at midnight.”

“I don’t think that’s how the story goes.”

“Hold on.” She dug through her closet pulling out the same exact dress but in black. “Here you go. No excuses.”

“Where are we going?” I asked as she grabbed me by the hand before I could finish putting my boots back on.

“Just down two floors. It’s usually just a bunch of horny atheists, sometimes a harnoy Catholic or two sneak in but it’s at least entertaining.’”

I let her drag me out of her room and into the elevator, tapping my feet nervously while we made our way to the second floor far too slowly for my liking. I recognized some of the faces immediately as we walked through the darkened room with neon lights glowing throughout it. Music blared from every angle as if different songs were playing from different rooms and I couldn’t recognize where it came from.

“Isn’t this Santorini’s ‘pet’? The one we’re all supposed to keep our hands off of or else?” I heard a voice and I turned to see the same guy Sonny had hated enough to send a message to more than once now.

Lincoln Rugsley.

“She’s my friend,” Reesa shouted over the music and he bore his eyes into me, looking me up and down like he didn’t know what to make of it.

“Well, well, I’ll hold your leash tonight if you need.” He winked at me and inched closer.

I froze in place but Reesa stepped in.

“Fuck off Lincoln.” She pushed him away and grabbed me by the wrist again, pulling me to a table with bowls of liquid and red plastic cups.

She poured the contents of the bowl into a plastic cup using a ladle before handing it over to me. “Be careful.” She raised her eyebrows, waiting for me to take a sip.

My eyes jarred open at the sweet taste.

“Yeah, that shit’s deadly. Don’t drink more than three,” she said then doubled back. “Actually, maybe don’t drink more than two. You’re pretty tiny.” She laughed, pulling me by the hand into a crowd of people who seemed to be dancing.

The drink was sweet and citrusy and I couldn’t help but guzzle it down, realizing how thirsty I was from crying so much. The music was too loud, and I would have much rather stayed in her room where it was quiet, but at least now I couldn’t hear my own thoughts. They were so self-deprecating, all I wanted to do was suffocate the tiny version of me that lived in my brain. Maybe put a giant pillow over her face until she stopped thrashing.

Maybe then I’d finally be free.

“You okay?” Reesa waved her hand in front of my face, forcing me to flinch back.

“Y-yeah,” I answered quietly, not bothering to scream over the music like she’d done.

“Let’s dance!” She pulled me into a crowd of other girls who gyrated and moved their hips in sync with the music.

I’d never felt more out of place and humiliated. The sudden urge to throw up the drink I’d chugged rumbled through my stomach. Everyone stared at me with chastising eyes, and I could hear Reesa telling me to move somewhere in the distance, but I just wanted to go home, to my home, with *them.*

Where I didn’t feel like I was being gawked at and they never passed judgements or false ideas about who I was. I stood in the middle of a few bodies while they pressed against me and danced to the thumping beat of the music. After a few songs started and ended seamlessly I could no longer bear the ache in my chest. The tears pricked at my eyes, and I pushed through the crowd of girls.

“Mina?” Reesa called out but I waved her off.

“I need air,” I yelled back as loud as I could muster.

I wiped the tears rolling down my cheeks and walked as far from the noise as I could. I stopped in front of the elevator, realizing I had nowhere to go without Reesa. I didn't even know which floor her room was on, let alone her room number.

"You look like you need a drink." A masculine voice said into the sensitive part of my neck, like he was trying to whisper it in my ear from behind.

"O-oh, I'm okay. I need some air." I looked down, averting his eyes.

The room was unsteady, and I felt sluggish and heavy.

"Woah," he said, bracing my forearms and holding me upright.

I blinked up at him, now that I was seeing him in the light he was kind of handsome. There was still a bruise fading from his face from the last time Sonny told him to stay away from me. He had golden red hair and jade-green eyes. He smiled too widely though, and it made the hairs on my arms stand up in warning.

I couldn't quite remember right at this moment why he was supposed to stay away from me. His voice was kind, and his eyes were soft with the same kind of gentleness Felix showed me.

"Maybe you *don't* need anymore." He laughed. "Do you want me to help you get outside?" he asked and I nodded, realizing I had no idea how to get out of this building.

My stomach cartwheeled while the elevator slowly descended, and I wondered how Reesa could drink three of these without hurling everywhere. The elevator dinged open, and he gestured out with his hand.

"After you," he said.

I stepped through the door, expecting to be left alone but he followed me, slowly picking up his gait with every step so I rushed my own. The hairs on

my neck stood up and I turned around at the perfect time to slam into his chest. I backed away nervously.

“I-I’m okay now. You can go back.” I assured him but he tsked, reaching for my wrist and pulling me into him.

“Let me go.” I pulled against him again.

“I can’t in good conscience let you wander around here all alone, to get lost. What would Santorini do to me if he found out I didn’t take good care of his pet?” he asked, a sinister smile forming on his face.

“Don’t call me that.” I frowned at him. “I’m not lost.”

“Oh, come on little ghost. You suck those Satanist’s cocks day in and out. Let me show you what God tastes like.” He wrapped his hand around my neck and lifted, forcing me backwards, my toes barely grazing the ground until my back found the rough surface of a tree.

He crushed me with his weight and pressed his nose to my cheek. I kept my head turned to the side, wincing while he dragged his tongue across my face.

“Get away from me!” I thrashed but he pinned my hands down to my sides. “Stop,” I begged.

He breathed heavily before sliding both of my wrists into one hand. “If you stay still, I won’t hurt you *too* much.” He dragged the side of his hand against my face and I grimaced at his touch. “Understood?” he asked, grabbing my chin and forcing me to look at him.

I was shaking uncontrollably from the cold, from fear, from rage, and disgust.

But somehow I managed a nod.

He dropped my hands to my side and ripped through the top of my dress, exposing my breasts to the cold wind. I pushed him away again with a cry,

“No!”

I ran as fast as I could, putting distance between myself and the dormitories, and hopefully… him. I could hear his footsteps pounding against the dirt path behind me. I used it to fuel me forward but I couldn’t ignore the sharp pains in my stomach that came from running.

He grabbed my shoulder from behind and slammed me into the ground. A sharp high pitch sound rang out in between my ears and my already foggy vision doubled. He was shouting something about me being a bitch, but it was too muffled for me to make out.

He threw me to the ground and crawled on top of me, his weight nearly suffocating me despite how hard I tried pushing him away. The dull pain clanging through my skull like the copper bell.

“Please…stop,” I begged again.

“Don’t blame me, blame Santorini for parading you around here like a goddamn dessert, clad in whore’s clothing.” He sneered before shoving his hands between my thighs, trying to part them despite how hard I clamped my knees together.

He perched over me, and I remembered the knife. I just needed to get to my holster. I sent my leg flying high in between his legs and he doubled over in pain, coughing and spitting blood in between groans of agony. I reached under the dress and wrapped my hands around the black opal handle before I took off running again.

But a sharp sting in my scalp pulled me back and I crashed into his chest. He pulled my hair again, this time sending me to the ground on my knees.

“*Now* I’m going to hurt you.” He sent his foot into my stomach.

I wrapped my arms around my belly, still tightly clutching my knife and struggling to take a single breath. The burning pain in my stomach only

amplified each time I tried to fill my lungs with air. He pulled me up by my hair, dragging me up to my feet again. He pressed his face against me hard, biting my lip and crushing my nose with his in a rage-fueled kiss that made me want to vomit. I tried to push him away with my free palm but he didn't budge.

I raised my blade in the air and sliced down, tasting the blood dripping from his face before he'd fully pulled away to shriek in horror.

"My fucking face! You bitch! My fucking face," he roared, I didn't have time to see what I'd done, I turned around like a madwoman as fast as possible.

But he was faster and angrier than before. He pulled me hard and I fell on the ground, painfully grating my skin on the asphalt. He clutched the side of his face in his hand, but I could see the gaping slash I'd made from his cheek all the way down to his jaw. The flaps of skin were torn savagely from my inexperience with the knife and his blood dripped over me while he shouted in anger.

"I-I'm sorry," I said. It was all I could cry out.

His fist was heavy against my face, a dull agonizing pain compared to the stinging force of Father Frollo's open hand against my skin. His left hand pressed my shoulder down firmly to keep me in place and I couldn't help but wonder if this was how I would die. I choked on the blood dripping into the back of my throat from my nose and opened my eyes to see him seething over me, like he hadn't decided what to do yet.

My hand burned something fierce and that's when I realized I was still clutching onto the knife Corvin gave me. My palm was wrapped tightly around the sharp edge, and I loosened my grip on it so I could grab the handle once again. His eyes darted over but before he could react I had

already sent my wrist up, stabbing down instead of slashing and jamming the knife straight into his shoulder.

He shrieked an obnoxious sound and I kicked him off of me with all of my might before running as fast as I could through the paved asphalt path that led back to the chapel. My heart hammered inside my chest and the bells in my head clanged painfully. After I couldn't feel my feet stomping below me anymore I turned back to see that he wasn't following me.

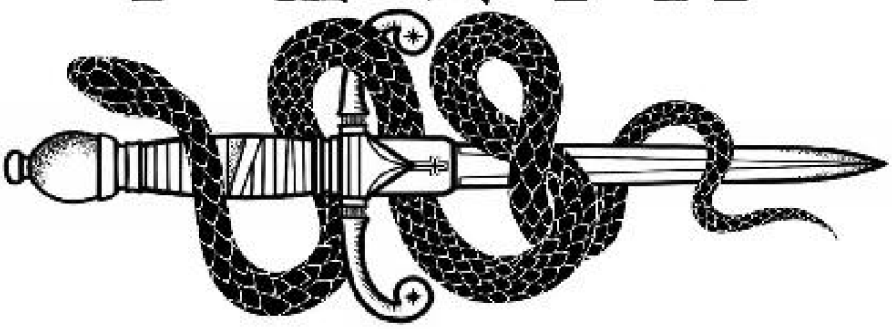
There was no one behind me anymore.

I collapsed to the ground, ignoring the pain of my shredded knees from the small pebbles that dug into my skin. With a heavy sob the adrenaline poured out of me in sharp waves and I sat there, trying to piece back together my soul for what felt like an eternity. My phone was gone, so I couldn't call Reesa. I was halfway between nowhere and the chapel and it seemed like all around me I only had made enemies.

Picking myself up I stumbled forward, reaching to feel the tender spot in the back of my head. I felt the wetness of the sticky liquid seeping onto my fingers from a small gash and I winced at the touch. I hiccupped a breath wrapping my arms around myself, and walked, shoving whatever dignity remained into a small corner of my mind with the recently dead version of myself that lived up there.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# FELIX



Corvin and I had split up and tore apart the cathedral to find her, he stayed back to hunt for Frollo, that fucking cocksucker. I wasted too much time checking irrelevant places like the gravesite or the woods before we realized where she'd gone.

It took everything not to murder that fucking nun tonight, but considering we'd just blown off Arlan Black *again*, I had a feeling he was gonna have a hard time finding a reason to give us anything we wanted. A defense team for murder charges probably wasn't going to fly well with him.

And now she had wandered off while we argued.

Calming Sonny down when he was this visibly wounded and insecure would be a goddamn miracle.

I wished I had my brother's blackouts to blame for the way I punched the shit out of him. Almost an out of body experience while I watched with every stone-heavy throw of my own fists against his face without him fighting back. He knew he deserved it and he sought the penance too. He

wouldn’t have kicked her out, but she didn’t know that, and now she was out there again.

Upset, scared, and traumatized from all the bullshit Frollo couldn’t stop shoveling her way. I gave up trying to call Reesa after the thousandth time and without any updates from Corvin, I had no idea what was going on.

And then I felt her.

Like a tug on my heart, pulling on my soul, dragging me to the door.

Sonny lifted his head up from his hands and followed me like he felt it too. I opened the chapel doors and there she was, soaking in the rain, all wretched and broken. She was too far to even reach out and knock. It looked like she’d been standing there a while, just frozen in place.

“I-I didn’t know where else to go,” she sobbed out, shaking her head, her makeup dripping down her face like muddled ink.

I pulled her into my arms and lifted her into the chapel, feeling her chest vibrate through her cries. I’d barely put her on the ground and Sonny had already pried her from my hold, examining her with a scowl carved too deeply onto his face.

That’s when I really noticed her.

Bruised and battered, her dress torn and her face cut up and reddening. Her hand was dripping blood steadily onto the floor. Sonny wrapped his fingers around her jaw, forcing a gasp from her when he brought her closer to him.

“Who did this to you, Pet?” His jaw muscles bulged. I could hear his teeth grinding against each other.

For a guy who only wavered between apathy and anger, it was surprising how many levels of rage he could actually feel.

She mumbled incoherently between her sobs while trembling in his hands like she hadn’t forgotten that he was the reason she’d been out there anyway.

“Who put their hands on you?” he asked again, pulling out his phone.

“The guy with reddish hair, the one from class.” She shivered and he took his jacket off and draped it over her.

She looked at him with big round eyes before she slipped her arms inside, pulling it shut in the middle to cover herself. I tore the bottom of my shirt and wrapped it around her palm like a bandage and tying it. Sonny walked over to the fireplace and started a fire. I wanted to pull her into the warmth of my embrace, wrap my arms around her and make her forget the last few hours. I wanted to tell her it was all going to be okay and that anyone who hurt her would bleed in retribution.

She hurt us, but we’d hurt her too.

“Sit by the fire,” Sonny told her but she didn’t move.

He let out a heavy sigh and picked her up, moving directly in front of the open flames and sitting her on his lap.

“A-are you still angry with me?” she asked, tears visibly falling down her face.

“Yes,” he told her, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear and not bothering to wipe her sorrow away.

He combed his fingers through it delicately, and though he was the sickest bastard I’d ever known, she somehow melted at his touch. I crouched down in front of her, lifting her chin up, examining her bruised cheek and her bleeding lip. The blood at her nose had crusted up, but her palm was still bleeding steadily. Her dress was torn in multiple places and I frowned, closing the jacket in the middle.

“What happened?”

“I was with Reesa. I needed air, and he was there. He was nice at first but then he tried to touch me…I didn’t want him to. He said he wanted me to taste God.” She shook her head and started to cry, “I’m sorry. I didn’t want him to touch me. And I’m sorry I went to Frollo.” She covered her face with her hands and my eyes met Sonny’s.

“He tried to touch you?” I asked.

Sonny’s hands dropped to cup her shoulders, his grip firm but somehow soothing her.

“He wouldn’t stop, so I kicked him and then he got angry and hit me. I had my knife so I used it on him and ran away.” Her eyes went wide, “My knife—It’s gone.” She sobbed harder.

“It’s okay, Pet. It did what it was supposed to do. We can get you another knife,” Sonny told her.

Sonny dialed Corvin on repeat until we finally got an answer.

“I can’t find Frollo but I think I found something else,” he yelled out angrily.

“Come back, she’s home now.” Sonny filled him in and with the word ‘home’ her shoulders sagged, like a burden had been lifted off of her.

“Is she okay? Are you okay Romi?” he asked, his tone switching to one full of concern.

“What’d you find?” I raised my voice so he could hear me, since Sonny had no inclination for suspense or mysteries.

“Found her knife, and some asshole it was lodged inside of. I’ll deal with it,” he said.

“No. Bring him here,” Sonny told him before clicking the phone off.

It didn’t take long for me to hear the Ducati’s horn right outside the chapel. Sonny looked at me knowingly and I pulled Romina off of his lap.

“Where are you going?” she asked him as he walked away.

“Bring her,” he said to me. “She needs to see.” He grabbed his Glock that had been sitting on the kitchen island and stuffed it into the back of his pants before walking towards the door.

She turned her head to look at me, the fear written plainly on her face.

“Come on pretty girl.” I pulled her up, wrapping my arm around her.

Sonny stood at the door with his arms crossed over his chest while he watched Corvin drag the sorry fuck by the foot from a rope tied to the back of his bike. He’d been going so slow that at most the kid would have some gnarly road rash, but it wasn’t going to kill him.

No, I would do that myself.

Corvin cut the rope and I walked through the door only to have Sonny’s arm block my way.

“Stay with her,” he said.

My nostrils flared, unhappy with his decision but he was right, she didn’t need to be left alone. I stepped back into the chapel and pulled her into my arms, sinking my nose into the small of her neck and taking a big inhale.

“You don’t smell like you,” I told her.

She turned her neck up to look at me and her lip quivered when I gazed down at her. I exhaled, feeling the weight of too many burdens I couldn’t fix on my own. The sound of flesh pounding over flesh broke our stare-off and we shifted our attention to Corvin and Sonny, mercilessly laying it into the piece of shit who put his hands on our girl.

He screamed loudly but it didn’t matter. We were too far away from the Grand Cathedral for anyone to take notice of anything happening this way.

“Now apologize.” Corvin pushed the asshole forward and Sonny gave him a sharp kick in the ass making him fall face first in front of Romina.

“She cut my fucking face,” he yelled, it was still dripping steady blood, a flap of skin peeled up.

Gnarly as hell. That was gonna scar.

“And you’re lucky because I taught her to cut a lot more than that.” He pulled Rugsley up by the back of his shirt.

He yanked the blade still lodged to his shoulder and the guy screamed something feral, his eyes rolling to the back of his head for a few seconds before he thrashed in Corvin’s hold.

“Fuck! Fuck! You’re all fucking psychos,” he yelled clutching his bleeding shoulder.

“Come near our girl again and it’ll be the last thing you do,” Sonny told him before pulling the gun out of his pants and pointing it at his head. “Go to the infirmary. Tell them how careless you were being, tell them about how you fell on your knife.”

He ran away cursing and hobbling with each step. Hopefully he’d make it to the infirmary before he passed out from blood loss or pain. Not that I really cared.

“I wanted to cut his hands off, but Santorini wouldn’t let me,” Corvin said to her as he scooped her from my arms and into his.

“That would have been messy.” She let out an honest to fucking Satan smile and my heart nearly broke at the sight.

We didn’t deserve her.

“You were going to leave me with these assholes, little lamb?” he asked, cupping her face into his hands.

Her lip quivered again and he didn’t hesitate before closing his lips around hers. His hand raked through her hair and she locked her arms around his neck but he broke the kiss short.

“Promise me you won’t,” he demanded.

“I promise.” She nodded her head, eyes twinkling in the night.

*OceanofPDF.com*

While Felix held the delicate fabric of my sanity in his hold, slowly healing me and turning me into something complete. Corvin could make me feel invincible. Even though I couldn't stop shaking in his arms, it was more than just fear running through my body. It was a sense of victory, one he'd created in me. There was something about watching him and Sonny break someone's bones with their bare hands that uncovered something hidden inside of me.

The skin of his knuckles were torn open.

For me.

I wrapped my arms tighter around his neck, the adrenaline still pumping violently inside my heart. He cupped my butt cheeks, lifting me up and I wrapped my legs around his waist, breathing in his comforting scent while he walked us back into the house.

"I lied, Romina," he said, kicking his shoes off and kissing me.

"About what?" I breathed out, breaking our kiss.

“About not being able to love you. It would be impossible for anyone to not love you,” he said before pressing his lips against mine again, walking us into the bathroom.

His hands squeezed and moved up and down my body, my legs still wrapped around his waist to hold me up. The hardness of his erection was firmly pressed against my center and when his hand found my breast I whimpered into his mouth.

“Did he touch you?” he asked, the line of his jaw hardening from clenching his molars together.

“No.” I shook my head.

“You did really good, little lamb.” He assured me. “But I’ll still kill him if you want.” His nostrils flared widely and he pressed his forehead down against mine.

He would have.

I knew it.

I just had to say the words.

Would I though?

Did I have it in me to take away someone’s life? Even if just with my words?

What if it damned me?

*What if it healed me?*

“What I want is you,” I told him, repeating his confession to myself silently.

He told me he loved me.

I wasn’t even sure if I knew what it meant but when I looked at him, I knew I felt it too, the same way I felt with Felix.

“You have me,” he said, and I looked behind him to see Felix at the door, Sonny behind him, watching from the hallway.

Corvin chuckled like he could read my mind. “You have them too, little lamb. Just say the words.”

He dropped me to my feet and walked me into the shower, step by step almost like a predator, honed in on its next meal. I backed up slowly, biting my lip in anticipation and ignoring the chill in my bones from my still wet clothes.

Corvin turned the handle on the shower and soon the hot spray of the water was coming down on both of us. He pulled at the straps of my dress, tugging them past my shoulders so I could shimmy my way out of it. I nudged the wet pile of fabric off to the side with my foot while he slipped his blood splattered shirt off. A low humming came from his chest that traveled up through his throat but never made its way out of his mouth.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he said and I shook my head.

“You can’t hurt me.” I reached for his belt with my uninjured hand, removing it before undoing his pants with his assistance.

I could hardly wait for him to get the tangled wet bundle off of his ankles before I dropped to my knees and ran my tongue over the throbbing length of his shaft.

“Fuck.” He took a deep breath and rested his forearm on the shower wall.

His brown eyes burrowed straight into mine and I inhaled deeply before hollowing out my cheeks and taking him into my mouth. He groaned, fisting my hair into his hands and moving himself in and out at the pace he wanted. It was slow, but deep and with every full thrust I nearly gagged, feeling him so far back in my throat.

But his moans of pleasure burned deep inside of me, urging me to continue because with every shudder I pulled from his body I reclaimed a piece of myself I'd thrown out over the years. If I was Arlan Black's granddaughter…

It meant that I was one of them.

I'd never been the depiction of sanctity that Frollo demanded from me.

That was an impossible lie.

"Wash her and get her dry," Sonny said angrily from the hall before disappearing, making Corvin chuckle.

"I think he's jealous he hasn't been where I have," he said, pulling me up off my knees and inching his fingers between my thighs. "Look how wet you are for me, little lamb," he whispered, spearing two fingers deep inside me.

Just as I went to drop my head and appreciate the feeling of his fingers inside of me, a strong grip pulled my chin up. Felix's eyes found mine. He was already undressed and the water beaded against his golden brown skin. Their similarities were unmistakable as they stood side by side.

There was something so wrong about having Corvin pleasuring me while Felix did nothing but watch, holding my eyes and attention captive.

He lathered the loofah with soap and though he never loosened his grip on my chin he began to scrub the sponge across my body, being extra careful and gentler on the areas that were already bruising up or scraped. Corvin's fingers never stopped, moving in and out of me at a slow, deliberate pace while his thumb worked circles over my clit.

"Oh," I groaned out with a mumble, clutching their arms in each hand as I braced myself for the incoming orgasm.

Felix used his hold on me to his advantage, sending his tongue into my mouth and quieting the sounds of my pleasure into nothing but a muffled groan between his lips and the crashing of the water. Once I stopped trembling they both pulled back, turning the water off and stepping back from me.

“I wanna hear you say it again,” Felix said, his chest heaving up and down with his breaths.

I already knew exactly what he wanted, he’d wanted the words I’d given to his brother, but he wanted them for himself too.

“I won’t leave.” I looked at him first and then Corvin. “I promise.”

“Say you belong with us,” he said.

“I belong with you.” I put it out there and immediately felt the weight of my words against the universe.

My skin pebbled with goosebumps.

“Did you feel that?” Corvin said with a smirk and I nodded. “You sign yourself over to us, then you sign yourself over to the Devil too. That’s him knocking, begging you to let him in.” My heart pounded at the idea of what he was suggesting.

I wasn’t sure if it was metaphorical, but I recognized that flash of darkness that flooded their eyes for a brief second.

“I don’t want Heaven if it’s without you.”

“That’s my girl,” Corvin said in a husky voice.

Felix was still standing there, the pain written all over his face. There was too much space between us and it was driving me insane.

“My brother’s pride is wounded, Romi,” Corvin explained, reading my mind again. “I have no pride.” He winked before scooping me up and carrying me to his room.

I turned my head to see Felix following us. Though his expression stayed the same, I saw the hurt Corvin described. I had always been nothing, how was I supposed to know that I was capable of leaving a mark on him? On any of them?

Corvin set me down on the ground and loomed over me, Felix hung back at the door. That's when I realized it. He was there to watch over, to make sure his brother didn't accidentally hurt me or himself. Despite how hurt he was feeling.

"You hurt me too… you know?" I said to him and Corvin turned his head back to see his twin's reaction.

"I should have told you the minute I knew. I regret it. But I can't take it back now. Can you forgive me?" His eyes glossed over with something painful that tugged at my heart.

"Yes." I exhaled knowing that I had already done it.

Corvin wanted me to be a knife; relentless, sharp, and concise. But I wasn't a knife, I was the sheathe, worn and weathered from the blade's constant marring. And I would take it over and over again if it meant the knife would always return to me. Because *they* were the weapon, and I was built to pardon their pain.

Maybe in the end, that's what love was. Forgiveness. Undeniable, unsolicited, and at times unrequited. It was the ability to look past the pain despite all the hurt it could cause you because in the end you knew they could do the same for you.

If that wasn't love, maybe this was as good as it got for someone like me.

Felix stepped into the room, shutting the door behind him.

They were still naked and it was an obvious fact I had not missed when they both prowled towards me.

“W-wait,” I said, realizing Felix had no intention of just watching over anymore. “Both of you?”

“It’ll be twice as good,” Corvin said with a dark smirk.

“We’ll make you feel so good, pretty girl.” They closed in on me, surrounding me from both sides.

I inhaled a stuttered breath. Corvin dropped to his knees, raking his tongue over the inside of my thigh while he lifted my foot and placed it over his shoulder. He used it as leverage to pull himself closer to me, burying his face between my legs and pressing the flat of his tongue against my swollen bundle of nerves.

Felix wrapped his arms around my waist from behind and dug his erection into my back. He exposed my throat, lifting my jaw up. His lips moved deliberately down my neck, peppering kisses as he traveled lower. His hands wandered, caressing my skin with firm touches. A silent kind of communication floated in the air between the twins, Corvin pulled back, letting him stroke his fingers between my legs and gather my arousal for himself.

He brought his fingers up to my lips. “Open.”

I wrapped my lips over his fingers, licking the taste of my climax from his skin and swirling my tongue until it was cleaned off.

Corvin grabbed my hips with both hands, practically diving face first into my center, this time using both his fingers and his mouth to work me into a frenzy. He made circles with his tongue and raked his fingers against the spot inside of me that felt like it was holding back a flood.

I came with a full body quake, grateful that there were two men holding me up because I thought my legs would give out and turn me into liquid. Corvin didn’t stop despite the protests that fought to escape my lips. I sank

my teeth into my flesh, knowing it was the only way to stop the treacherous words from leaving my mouth. The taste of blood was far better than the taste of my own lies.

They would have stopped if I had said it.

They wouldn't understand.

Only Sonny understood.

Corvin placed me on the bed, turning me to face him. I was on my knees, still catching my breath when I felt Felix's body pressed hard against me from behind.

"Down on your hands, Mina," he whispered into my ear, forcing the hairs on the back of my neck to stand.

"What are you going to do?" I asked, turning my head to look back at him as he took all of my hair into his hands, using it like a leash.

Corvin pulled my chin forward, climbing onto the bed on his knees in front of me and whispering into my ear. "You're gonna be the main dish at our spit roast, little lamb." I was going to ask him what he meant but before I could open my mouth, I felt Felix's tip pushing against my wetness and slowly sinking inside of me.

I went to drop my head but his grip on my hair tightened, and he pulled, forcing me to turn my gaze up to see Corvin's throbbing erection just inches from my face. I licked my lips instinctively before parting them to let him slide his way in. The two of them bottomed out inside of me simultaneously and the three of us groaned with pleasure in sync.

It was barbaric sounding.

Filthy.

Ungodly.

I wanted to douse myself in it and get lost with them in the shadows.

“You’re so fucking tight,” Felix said with a breathy, strained voice, his free hand reaching down to cover itself in my arousal before moving against my clit.

They moved out of sync, in and out of me, while I braced myself on my hands and knees, clutching the sheets under my palms. Everytime Felix thrusted himself in he pulled on my hair, eliciting a moan from deep within my throat. Corvin’s large hands held the side of my face while he used my mouth to finish what we’d started in the shower. His fingertips digging deeper into my flesh the closer he came to unraveling. Each sound out of me was a catalyst to their next as we all threw ourselves closer to our undoing.

I swirled my tongue each time he drug himself in and out of my mouth, trying my best to coat every inch of him that I could. Once he’d get past my tongue my eyes would water and I’d choke on my breathing. Not such a terrible way to die. Felix picked up the pace, slamming his hips against mine and hitting a spot inside me that made me feel like I would explode.

I felt it building inside of me, like the slow pitter patter of a raindrop turning into a violent downpour. I shattered with my climax, my jaw frozen in place and open while Corvin thrusted inside of me uncaring if my teeth raked along his length.

I couldn’t properly scream with him stuffed into my mouth, my muscles clenching while I rode down the final wave of my orgasm.

Felix hunched over me, his thick shaft pulsing inside of me, letting me know I’d taken him with me too.

“I’m gonna come, little lamb.” Corvin said and his twin pulled on my hair again as if to ready me.

Hot spurts of his salty release draped over my tongue and shot into the back of my throat. It was perverse. All of it. But it was mine. Because I was theirs.

And it was the most right I had felt in my entire existence.

We laid down in a pile of sweaty bodies, panting heavily for oxygen.

“I want to know about the binding,” I said to them both, shifting my eyes to either of my sides to gauge their reactions.

“Little lamb, what do you know of being bound to someone?” Corvin asked, propping himself up on his elbow to look at me.

“What do *you?*” I asked him, raising an eyebrow.

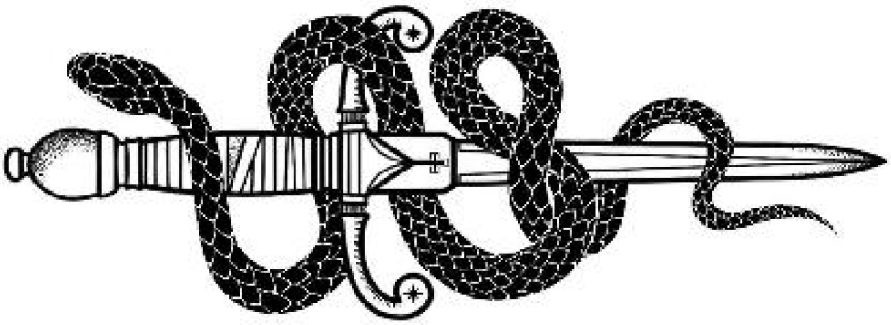
“*Everything* little lamb. You don’t bind yourself to someone unless you know, without a doubt, you won’t want to spend a day in your life without them ever again.”

“That’s what I want.” I didn’t blink, hoping they would take my plea seriously.

Felix brushed my hair out of my face and kissed my cheek. He gave me a faint smile as if to say we all know who that decision belonged to.

I was going to need to find the courage to climb Orodruin and toss the ring into the fire myself.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

Both Escuras were in class. For the sake of keeping everything tucked under the rug neatly, it was better that we played along as if nothing had happened. It was his word against the three of ours.

**Me:** Any news?

**Felix:** He wasn't in class. Someone mentioned seeing him with a big ass bandage on his face though, but no one knows what happened. Looks like he's keeping his mouth shut. For now.

**Me:** Good. Let me know if you see him…with his mouth open.

**Felix:** Should I fuck it then?

Idiot. I tucked my phone back in my pocket and rolled my eyes. She'd be back from her walk with Reesa soon. I had no reason to keep her locked away. We'd beaten the Rugsley kid into a bloody pulp. That on top of the damage she had done to him, he would have been stupid to come back for more. She asked to spend time with her friend and none of us felt right

telling her otherwise, despite her friend being a giant idiot who put her in that position.

I wasn't innocent either. I knew.

I filled the tub up, pouring some oils and petals and shit in the water before lighting a candle. I wrote the note and smirked to myself before exiting the bathroom.

My phone buzzed again, this time a call. I picked it up, annoyed because my asshole brothers knew I didn't enjoy wasting time on the phone.

"What?"

"Carmine Santorini?" A female voice said on the other end.

"This is he."

"This is Dr. Fields, I'm Arlan Black's doctor," she said with a steady voice.

"Yes." I urged her on, already knowing where this call was heading.

"You were listed as his next of kin—" she began but I cut her off.

"Is he dead?" I asked, already knowing the answer myself.

There was too much unresolved, too many unknowns. If he was dead, everything was left open and there was no guarantee for any of us how the future would play out. And most of all it meant we were no longer safe here.

"Yes," she said into the line.

I hung the phone up and exhaled. A heavy weight lifting off of my shoulders but all at once dragging me down deeper like an anchor. I wasn't the only person who'd care about his death anymore. I wasn't the only one it affected. Even if I was the one who felt the sharp claws of his parenthood.

Growing up under Arlan's cold embrace was the kind of upbringing that would either make you or break you. Up until recently, I had fully

convinced myself that Korina Black had run away, unable to deal with her father's cruelty. But now knowing Frollo was once Arlan's apprentice, nothing made sense.

I was ten years old when the old man decided I had too much chaos in me to go to waste. He told me nothing of the ritual until I had been chained to a concrete slab, his following watching closely as he plunged the athame straight into my heart. Instead of death, I was greeted by the Disordered, who I pledged to serve unquestioningly. He drained the blood from my lungs and filled them back with air before sealing the wound shut and forming the scar in the center of my chest.

It was the only time I'd ever seen fear on Arlan's face. But it wasn't just fear there, it was envy. As hard as he tried, and through all his effort, he'd never come this close to the source of the magic he so desperately craved to control.

I carried it with me.

It was the real reason he'd accepted me as his successor, because he knew the shadows coursed through my veins in a way they'd never touch his own. His followers had seen it too, and of their own volition, they became mine.

I crossed the threshold into my room, feeling a sharp sting and swatting my arm at what I thought was a bug. My vision blurred and I tried blinking it away, the shadow in my room moved out of my periphery just as I dropped to the ground.

I felt a sharp pain in my gut, reminiscent of a boot, but I wasn't even sure I could groan. I couldn't make a sound. I tried blinking my eyes open, but they were too heavy. I felt the presence leave the room but all I could think about was her.

Defenseless again.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I stepped through the empty chapel after dismissing Reesa. I was surprised that they were letting me out of their sight but the balance of things had shifted with the truth about me coming out. It wasn't their choice to make, and they knew it, despite how angry they were with her for being so reckless. I needed my only friend, and they wouldn't deny me that. I still wanted her carefree presence to take me away from the flashes of violence that kept painting my memory.

We walked away from campus, wandering the woods that surrounded the property. I told her what happened despite the boys thinking she shouldn't be trusted. She had that look in her eyes when she saw my bruised-up face and I couldn't for a moment let her have any suspicion that one of them had done that to me.

They weren't capable of that, and I trusted her to keep my secrets. The guilt of it was almost too much for her to bear once I told her. It wasn't her

burden to bear that there were monsters in this world, but she thought it was her fault that they got to me.

I shut the door and smelled the scent of something sweet and soothing in the air. Following it to the bathroom, there was a scented candle burning over the porcelain sink. A note with Sonny's handwriting scribbled on it. *Put them on*. I looked to the side and found a pair of black satin eye covers. Flower petals covered the floor leading up to the bathtub.

It was full and the water was warm enough that I could see the steam rising from it. I took a deep breath. Sonny and I were still on rocky ground and just the thought of his name made my stomach turn into knots.

This was an olive branch.

A kinky, Sonny Santorini-style olive branch.

I dropped my clothes to the floor, putting my knife on the counter and picking up the blinders before dipping my toes into the hot water. I lowered down into the rose petal covered tub stretching my legs, moaning at the feeling of the warm bath loosening my muscles. Finally, after relaxing a bit, I sank all the way down into the water, letting my hair float at the surface before sliding the blinders over my eyes.

The room was quiet. Aside from the flickering flame and the sound of the wick burning down there was nothing but the splashing of the water with my movements. With my vision impaired, I could practically feel my pulse making ripples with each pump of my heart.

I felt a presence in the room and my heart quickened with anticipation.

"Sonny?"

No response.

I raised my hands to lift up the blinders, but a large hand stopped my arm, gripping it tightly until I resigned to dropping them back in the water.

Then suddenly a hand gripped me under the surface, cupping my sex and forcing a gasp out of me. Another hand pushed my chest against the tub wall just as his fingers found their way inside of me.

“Ohh,” I moaned, dropping my head back to relax.

“I knew you were a dirty whore.” My eyes jarred open from the shock of the voice I faintly recognized. “Frollo promised you’d give yourself to me easily.”

I scratched at his arms, doing my best to push him away. Before I could lift the blinders up, two heavy hands pushed me under. I screamed but my lungs filled with water and burned viciously inside my chest. I scratched and ripped at what I could, feeling bits of skin gathering under my nails but knowing I was dangerously close to losing consciousness.

Just as my head felt lighter than ever, the weight of the stranger above me disappeared and I rose out of the bath with a gasp, swallowing air while choking on water all at once. The burning in my throat didn’t ease up but I rushed to pull the eye covers off just in time to see Sonny running a blade over Lincoln Rugsley’s throat. His blood gushed out of the slit on his neck and poured out even faster when Sonny tipped his head back, pulling on his hair and forcing the light to go out of his eyes.

The crimson liquid spilled out over me, filling the tub and drenching the white tiles as his body collapsed halfway into the tub. Sonny sank to the floor, looking paler than I ever thought possible. Even his blue eyes had no trace of life in them.

His hand opened and the knife tumbled from his grip onto the floor. I reached for it, lifting my arms over my head and stabbing down into the intruder's back. His muscles jerked but once I pulled the knife out and sent it down a second time there was no response. Or the third time, or even the

fifth. I was panting heavily when Sonny's hand reached out to grip my wrist to stop me from pulling the knife out again.

He looked terrible. His skin was practically gray, all of the color had drained from his face.

I glanced over to the mirror hanging on the back of the door to see the bloody mess dripping from me. There was no distinction between what was water and what was inside my attacker's body anymore and the tub overflowed from it, pouring over the edge and onto the floor.

Sonny was drenched, sitting next to the tub with his back against the wall, his shoulders sagging heavily and his eyes hooded. His head dropped heavily, and I gasped, realizing that something was wrong.

"Are you okay? What happened?" I crawled out of the tub and into his lap, water going everywhere.

"J-just…tired," He croaked out before his eyes closed.

"Sonny?" I cried out, shaking his shoulders. "Sonny!" I begged him again to open his eyes, but he didn't respond.

The tears came and I couldn't stop them. The feeling of crashing into a brick wall hit me while I settled into the realization of what had just happened. I sobbed onto Sonny's chest pitifully, my body weak and unable to do anything but fail me. I laid there, naked and bloody on his lap for what felt like a lifetime. Just me, the sound of Sonny's heart beating far too slowly, and the sizzling electric sound of the refrigerator in the distance.

I woke up with a cloud of confusion hanging over me.

I was no longer naked, but wearing one of Felix's shirts, curled into a ball on his lap on the couch. I looked up at him and as if he could sense my gaze his arms wrapped around me tighter, surrounding me with his comforting embrace before he'd even tipped his chin down to look at me.

He took a stuttered breath before burying his face into my hair.

"I'm so glad you're okay." He inhaled deeply before continuing in a cracked voice, "There was so much blood I didn't know what to think."

It took me a while to register what he was trying to explain, before I realized what kind of scene he must have walked into when finding me.

"Sonny?" I asked him, the worry rushing back into my body once I remembered the kind of state he was in.

"He'll be okay. The asshole drugged him. He's sleeping it off." He squeezed me tighter and I melted into his embrace.

"He saved me," I told Felix, though I knew he'd already known that fact, but for some reason I needed to hear it with my own voice.

"Mhm. He does that."

"W-where is—" I began to ask but my voice failed me as I tried to ask about the intruder.

"Corvin is dealing with it," he said in a soothing tone as he recognized my panic.

"What do you mean dealing with it?" I asked.

"He and the girl are digging a hole out back for him." His voice turned cold and he brushed my hair out of my eyes. "Don't spare a moment thinking about him, okay?"

"Reesa?" I asked, the tears reaching the surface again.

“Yeah, she found you both first. Came screeching down the soccer field like a banshee blubbering about the blood.” He chuckled a little before clearing his throat. “She’s an idiot, and possibly has a few loose screws but she might just be a decent friend. The guilt might be killing her.”

“I don’t understand why he hated me…” I said it with an exalted breath and Felix took a minute to respond, the silence almost overwhelming.

“Because he knew you’d never be his.” He looked down, his dark eyes burning through me. “A man’s biggest weakness is knowing they’ll never have something that they want.”

“Why would he want me?” I asked.

“Oh, Romina. Who the fuck wouldn’t?” He tightened his hold on me again and though his words were meant to comfort, I tensed up the minute they breathed air. “I won’t let anyone hurt you, ever again.”

I woke up still on Felix’s lap, his head tipped back on the couch so far that his snores were impossible to ignore. I lifted off from him and tiptoed my way down the hall. Corvin’s light was still on in his room, but I wasn’t even sure what time it was. If he’d been up all night digging a grave, it was likely he was exhausted.

There was no way Reesa actually helped him dig it.

She probably just complained and made jokes the entire time.

I hovered my hand over the door, as if to knock, but something held me back. I turned around to face the bathroom, gasping out loud once I pushed

the door open. There wasn't a trace of what had happened in the room. If anything it was cleaner than it'd ever been before and it smelled of pungent chemicals, making my eyes water.

I stepped back into the hallway, one foot behind the other until my back hit a stone wall. I didn't have to turn around to know who it was.

"Why are you prancing around outside my room, little lamb? It's late."

"You cleaned it all up?" I asked him, turning my head to the side so I could get a better look at him.

"Cleaned what up?" He frowned but there was a faint curl to his lip that gave him away.

"Won't they notice he's gone?" I asked.

"That seems more like a *them* problem and not an *us* problem. They can't prove anything even *if* they were to find his body." He draped his arms over me, pulling me even closer to him.

"Where's your keeper?" he taunted in my ear.

I smirked.

"Where's *yours?*" I turned around, pressing my hands to his chest and looking up at him.

The smile on his face was genuine.

"Touché, brat. Wanna risk it all tonight?" he asked, gesturing to his open door and I bit my lip, looking back towards the sleeping Escura on the couch.

They were identical but they were so different. Two puzzle pieces cut in the same shape that were meant for two separate images. You could make it fit, but it didn't work. Somehow both their pieces fit inside mine though, and maybe that was the point.

I nodded, taking his hand and following him in.

He’d barely shut the door before he’d spun me around in his arms, sliding his hand up my torso and cupping my breast.

“Mmm,” I moaned, the feeling of his rough touch against my skin was too electrifying to pretend otherwise.

His hand gripped me from behind and pulled me even closer. I wrapped my knee around his waist and he took the opportunity to drop me down on his bed.

“Are you okay?” he whispered.

I took a moment to appreciate the entirety of the question before nodding my head. It was far too big of a spectrum of possibilities that I couldn’t answer entirely truthfully. Not with words.

Because I wasn’t okay.

Not unless there was one of them near me, suffocating me with their presence and keeping me safe. My heart was bursting at the seams every time I thought something might take me away from them, or them away from me.

“We can just sleep if you want.” He pulled me under the blankets when I didn’t respond.

I didn’t realize I was crying until he’d already wiped the tear with the back of his finger. He held me tighter, turning me so that my back was to his chest and he curled his body around me like protective armor. I let out a sigh I didn’t know I had been holding in and drifted off to sleep.

I woke up to the scorching heat of two bodies pressed against me, opening my eyes to find Felix’s head on my chest and his leg draped over my hip. To my left Corvin nuzzled into my neck and his feet tangled around mine.

“Mmm,” I grunted, turning towards Felix.

I heard a low growl behind me. The hair on the back of my neck stood up to attention and I froze. Felix's eye's jarred open and a smirk painted his face mischievously.

"You left me," he said accusingly, but all I could hear was the seductive tone hiding behind the words.

"You looked so peaceful sleeping." I placed my hand on his chin and at the same time I felt Corvin's fingers slide over my hip.

"Just tell him the truth, you came looking for satisfying dick," Corvin grumbled in my ear and my face must have turned beet red, because I felt like it was on fire.

"If that was the case, she would have stayed with me," Felix argued, his tone still playful as he slid his thigh between my legs.

Corvin's grip on my hip tightened to a bruising pressure and his hand found its way to my breast again, or maybe it'd been there all night and I hadn't noticed. He rubbed his fingers over my nipple and I dropped my head back against his chest, his hands directing my hips to grind down against his brother's leg. His erection was hard, thick steel planted against my behind.

"Please," I breathed out just as a finger found its way to my clit. I moaned at the electrifying feeling, the set of fingers continued to stroke me, igniting pleasure all throughout my body.

Strong hands still pinned my hips in place, moving me to their pace, grinding my release out of my body and using Felix's thigh as an instrument. I closed my eyes so I could lose myself to the feeling.

"How about both of us at once this time?" Felix whispered the question in my ear and Corvin chuckled darkly.

“You’re dripping all over his leg just from the suggestion,” Corvin said as Felix pulled his fingers away.

I whimpered desperately and a dimpled smile decorated his face. He licked his fingers clean while I continued to rub against his leg, desperate to climb higher before the free fall.

“I don’t know brother, I don’t think she even needs us,” Felix taunted and I whined, pulling him closer to me and locking my lips against his.

“Please,” I whispered to myself, hoping the words would reach their ears.

Corvin’s hand released my breast as it found its way to my throat. I tensed, he didn’t squeeze, but his fingers wrapped around my neck possessively.

“Do you trust me, little lamb?” he asked.

“Yes.” I relaxed and melted into his body before feeling the intrusion of his impossibly thick erection entering me.

“Good. Take all of me then.” He groaned as he bottomed out, sheathing himself inside me fully.

It was undeniable how it got better each time they made their way inside me.

“Ahh!” I cried, gripping tightly around Felix’s shoulder while his fingers found their way to my clit once again.

“Come for us Mina,” Felix said sweetly.

They worked together, fingers rubbing and hands caressing me, driving me wild with a need to explode and shatter into a million pieces. I panted, unable to find a steady breath before the first orgasm rippled through me like a wave.

“*Such* a good girl, that’ll make the next part easier.” Felix encouraged.

I was still skewered onto Corvin when he lifted me up and carried me off his bed. He lowered down onto the leather chair next to his bed before he pulled himself out of me. I shuddered at the feeling of emptiness that came with it but before I could miss it too much Felix was already kneeling in front of us, two fingers methodically thrusting in and out of me.

I dropped my head back to Corvin's chest, relishing the unending pleasure they seemed to never tire of dishing out. And then I felt the tip of Corvin's manhood against my tightest hole and I tensed up again.

"Don't worry little lamb, I'll make sure you're ready for me before I fill you up here." He pulled me against him so that the pressure of his erection against my center was nearly unbearable.

I was aching to feel them inside of me.

Both of them.

Like a mind reader, Corvin's fingers found their way inside me as well, battling his brother for dominance over who could make me unravel faster. I clenched the arms of the leather chair and cried a guttural scream straight from my throat while I came undone with their fingers stretching my inner walls.

"That's two." Felix smirked like he'd won some sort of prize.

Just as he pulled his fingers out of me he shoved them into my mouth, surprising me with the tangy flavor of my own arousal coating his skin. It was so dirty, so impossible sinful, but all I could think about was how I wanted more and how this couldn't be the end.

Felix backed away and reached into his twin's nightstand, pulling out a plastic bottle. He tossed it to Corvin who poured it generously on his fingers before he pressed against my puckered hole. He gave me no warning before pushing against the tight band and making his way in. My

eyes rolled back at the sensation, and I whimpered, sitting heavier on his hand for more.

“Oh Sonny’s really corrupted you, hasn't he little lamb?” Corvin whispered in my ear, and I nodded, biting my tongue to keep from begging for more.

Felix lowered himself to both knees and then his mouth was on me. Hot, wet, and locked around my clit while his fingers thrusted in and out of me. Corvin withdrew his fingers slowly.

“Breathe. You have to relax,” he coaxed into my ear and I nodded, paying attention to the feeling of Felix’s mouth against me instead.

I could only focus on the obnoxious sound of him lapping wildly at my center. But then the burning that came with Corvin stretching me open was too much to ignore.

“Ahh!” I yelled out. “You’re too big.” He pulled my shirt over my head, leaving me completely naked before his twin.

“You can take me Romi. Can’t you?” he said far more gently than I thought he was ever capable of.

I nodded, focusing once again on Felix devouring me like a starving man who’d finally been given a meal.

“Lean forward,” Corvin whispered and I did, bracing against Felix while Corvin’s hand pushed against my low back and he slowly sank his way in through the tight barrier.

“Ahh,” I cried again, but the feeling of cold lube sliding between my cheeks caught me off guard, silencing me.

He pulled me back, hands firmly clutching my breasts while he lowered me onto him slowly, filling me up completely from behind. I panted heavily and sweat beaded at my temple while I fought to steady my breath.

“I need a minute.” I exhaled and Corvin pulled me back, the skin on my back stuck to his tattooed chest.

“Take all the time you need,” he said, looking down at me, squeezing my breasts tightly in his hands and eliciting a moan from me.

“Speak for yourself. Every minute I’m not inside her is agony.” Felix rumbled from below before wiping his mouth with the back of his arm.

He rose up over me like he wasn’t bothered by the fact that he was naked and three inches away from his brother. But I guess that wasn’t the wildest thing that was happening in this room right now. Corvin wrapped each arm under my knee and spread my legs open until I was completely vulnerable and at their mercy.

My cheeks flushed with so much heat I thought I would burn. My knees instinctively buckled to close, but Corvin chuckled an amused response.

“Ah- Ah- Ah, little lamb,” he warned, lifting me off of him just slightly so that he could sink down further and I gasped, clenching the arms of the chair tighter.

“Are you ready for me, Mina?” Felix asked, his hand wrapped around my chin to keep my gaze locked onto his.

I nodded, mumbling something incoherent when he crushed me with his body and his monstrously thick head pressed to my entrance. I whined, feeling the confusing need that came with being filled from behind when I still felt so empty inside.

And then he impaled me with a single thrust.

“Look how well you’re taking both of us,” Felix whispered the praise in my ear and Corvin’s hand gripped my neck once again from behind.

Holding, never squeezing.

“You were made for us, little lamb,” he said with a breathy voice.

Every moment that followed was like an out of body experience. A collection of sounds amplifying the feelings that rippled over every inch of my body. From their pained grunts of pleasure—as if every stroke, every thrust, was killing them as much as it was bringing me back to life—to the wet, carnal sounds of them entering and slamming against me with no abandon.

I forgot who I was.

I was an instrument for receiving pleasure and they were the demons who'd found me, who pried me open to reveal all of my secrets, my fantasies, before I'd even known what they were myself.

Every dream, every weird picture-like flash in my head was of them.

Of these men that crashed into my life and ripped it apart like the skin on an animal being flayed for leather.

They moved against each other, pulling out and thrusting at different speeds and winding up the coil buried deep in my core.

"Kiss me," I begged Felix while squeezing my grip around his forearms, my nails cutting into his skin as I prepared for the incoming climax.

He ate up my screams as an earth-shattering orgasm burst out of me.

I shook in their hold and they continued to fill me up, moving at their own pace and using my body for their own need until they'd each found their release. Felix pulled out first and I trembled when he slid out from inside of me while Corvin's arms were still binding my legs up and leaving me exposed.

He pulled out of me next and I winced at the strange and uncomfortable feeling of emptiness after being so inexplicably full. Felix tossed a towel underhand to Corvin, who caught it before it could slap me in the face. He

dipped it between my thighs and gently dabbed away the cum that seeped out.

“Now fuck off Felix. You always get the morning snuggles,” Corvin said, crushing me into his arms and pulling me down onto the bed with him with a squeal.

Felix didn’t argue or rebuke, and I didn’t have the energy to keep my eyes open to figure out who would win. Corvin’s heavy hold was too comforting and soon I’d fallen into a deep sleep once again.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I woke up, my mouth parched and my throat dry.

A scratchy cough made its way out of my chest and I rolled out from underneath Corvin’s arm before tapping my way to the kitchen and getting a glass of water. I chugged it down too fast, making my stomach hurt and having to push down the wave of nausea that followed from it.

I filled the glass up again, and walked back down the hallway.

I didn’t knock.

I didn’t need to.

When you offered yourself to the Devil willingly, there was no need for an invitation.

I turned the knob and walked in. The scent of his cologne lingered in the air, invading my senses. It brought a type of longing that filled my heart and made it heavy. Drifting away from Sonny was a kind of pain I didn’t know would scar me up from the inside out.

But I had no idea what I'd done to create the rift between us, let alone how I could heal it. I placed the glass of water next to his bedside, louder than I'd intended to. I stared down at him, always so peaceful like this but no one got to see it. It was like all of the hardness was stripped away from his features. I wanted to bring him that kind of serenity, but it seemed like all I did now was deepen the scowls that were permanently fixed to his awoken state.

He kept pushing me away, and like an idiot I kept coming back.

Did I like pain, or did I just have no idea how to live without it?

I couldn't discern the difference.

Maybe I didn't need to.

"You reek of sex," he said without opening his eyes.

I flushed from embarrassment and turned to leave the room without saying a word. Instead, I felt his hand around my wrist and I froze in place.

"I didn't say go," he said with a hoarse voice.

I turned back to face him, his bright blue eyes fixed onto where his hand gripped me tightly before he moved them up to my face.

"How do you feel?" I asked, sitting on the edge of the bed next to him.

"Like death. You're okay?" he asked.

"I am. Thanks to you." He squeezed around my wrist a bit tighter and I held my breath.

He tugged me down, wrapping his arms over my chest and pulling my back to him. His exhales were deep and long and felt hot against my shoulder. Sonny Santorini was massive compared to my tiny frame. There was something incredibly frightening and yet completely soothing about being trapped under his hold. He *was* the dragon Smaug, everything that

had once made him seem evil from the outside was obvious now that it was just a product of his own isolation.

“There’s a problem with us, right?” I whispered out after a few minutes of lying there, unsure if he was even awake anymore.

“Pet, the only problem with us is that I can’t figure out whether I want to kill you, or kill *for* you.” His deep voice rumbled in my ear.

He had done it to himself, kept others at an arm's length because it was the only way he could control the way he felt. He was the same as the dragon and he guarded me like his treasure. Maybe maybe after a lifetime of being dismissed as nothing, it was a refreshing kind of terror to be overwhelmed by his greedy grasp.

So dreadfully safe.

“I think you decided,” I whispered with a smile.

“Seems so.”

It was quiet for another minute or so and I thought maybe he’d fallen back asleep, but then he spoke again. Almost too quiet to hear, but impossible to ignore.

“My father killed my mother when I was eight.” I held my breath, not sure what I could possibly even say at that moment.

I couldn’t imagine the hardened version of the guy I knew today as an innocent boy, but here he was, finally dropping his walls and filling in the pieces to let me know why. Why that innocence was long gone, why his eyes were so cold, why he spiraled without control.

“He came home drunk and she made some threat about cutting his allowance or something.” He laughed but it was a pitiful sound. “Can you believe that? Over money?” I exhaled, shaking my head and he continued again.

“I woke up to the sound of his fist hitting her but by the time I’d come out of my bedroom her face wasn’t even recognizable. All he could do was mumble something about the money. I can’t even remember what he actually said.”

“What happened then?” I asked him and his hold on me tightened.

He hesitated before taking another deep breath.

“Then I got his gun from the side of his bed, pointed it at his head and shot at him until his face came off.”

I pulled his arms around me tighter, as if that somehow would bring him comfort though it was quite clear he was the one soothing me. I felt his inhale, his nose buried deep in the mess of my hair, but he didn’t say anything else.

I couldn’t bring myself to it either.

I woke up alone in Sonny’s bed.

I don’t know why I had expected more after his confession yesterday, but after a lifetime of silence between us, we both fell asleep. Maybe there was nothing left to be said.

He was a little boy who was forced to grow up before his time.

He was a protector.

But his closet wasn’t just full of skeletons. His closet had demons clawing at the door, begging to come out.

After what felt like an eternity, I decided to crawl out of his room and repair the damage from yesterday. I looked in the mirror, repulsed by the state of my hair, tangled up and crunchy in places where more blood than water had soaked into it.

I eventually resigned myself to taking a thorough shower and washing the essence of somebody else's death off of me. It didn't feel as wrong as I expected it to.

It didn't feel like anything at all.

I could hear the three of them talking in the kitchen and I stayed hidden in the hallway.

"Who's going to tell her?" Corvin asked.

"Tell her what? That her only family member is dead? That nothing's really changed even though she's all alone in this world?" Sonny said with a bitter tone.

"She's not alone." Felix's voice was cold, putting Sonny in his place.

"You tell her then, I can't hurt her anymore. You're at least good at it." Corvin sounded wounded.

"No, she's just good at letting me," Sonny said, pushing his stool away from the island hard enough for me to hear it scratching against the marble.

"Tell me what?" I entered the room, and they held their breaths.

"Arlan is dead," Sonny said, standing up.

Three words. They meant nothing and yet so much all at once.

I didn't respond. I didn't have enough thoughts yet. I didn't know how to mourn a stranger.

"Romina?" he asked, "Did you hear me?"

"I did."

“Pretty girl? What can I do for you? What are you feeling?” Felix asked anxiously while walking over to me.

“Nothing. I-I didn’t know him. I don’t know what I’m supposed to feel. Mad?” I told him honestly while I tried to sort through the pile of emotions weighing me down.

“Mad?” Corvin asked.

“Mad at myself, for not going when I had the chance. Mad at the universe for dealing me these cards. Mad at Sonny for keeping this from me until it was too late,” I said, making eye contact with him.

He didn’t look away.

“Mad that I’ll never get to know the only family that might have cared for me.”

“I’m gonna stop you right there, Pet.” Sonny walked up to me. “You can be as mad at me as you want, that’s your right. But I’m not sorry and I don’t regret my decision to keep you from him, just the same as I tried to keep you away from Frollo.”

His nostrils flared with each exhale.

“Monsters come in different shapes, and they all wear different masks to try to blend in. Frollo’s wears a halo while mine wore a suit and tie. Your grandfather wasn’t a good man. If anyone knows this it’s me. You want to lament on what your life would have been like if you would have been born in his house? You’re looking at it Romina, it looks like me. Arlan was a cold, loveless, son of a bitch who would have done nothing but try to shape you in his image for the sake of his cult. He wouldn’t have loved you, he wouldn’t have raised you, he would have ripped you apart. You would have just been the means to the end for him. I don’t regret shielding you from his hatred. He didn’t deserve to know you.”

His last words echoed through the chapel ceiling and Felix wiped away the tears I didn’t know were falling.

“Okay,” I whispered with trembling lips.

“We need to leave campus,” Sonny said, changing the subject sharply.

“When will you be back?”

“We won’t.” My heart dropped into my stomach and my vision tunneled. The moment I’d been dreading had finally come and I was nowhere near prepared to say goodbye. How was I supposed to move on? What would happen to me now? What would Frollo do to me? “You’re coming with us. The incident with our little friend won't go unnoticed.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Even assholes are missed. His parents, friends, people are bound to come looking for him once he misses enough classes. We need to not be here when that happens. Arlan being dead is the excuse we needed to get the fuck out of dodge.”

“Why would anyone think you three are involved?”

“Have you seen these heathens?” Felix laughed, clapping Sonny on the back. “They’re begging to be read their rights.”

With his shirt off, so many more of his tattoos were exposed. Different macabre illustrations decorated Sonny’s chest and his stomach, every one so unique and so definitive of who he was in every way. There was less skin showing than art on his body.

Sonny was rarely shirtless, but he just so happened to be in nothing but sweatpants, still recovering from being drugged. The tattoo of the Balrog covered his entire back in pitch black ink, swirls of red bringing to light the servant of Morgoth. Just a few weeks ago those words would have meant

nothing to me, now they were the shape of the key I knew unlocked who Sonny was.

“Why don’t you have tattoos?” I asked Felix curiously.

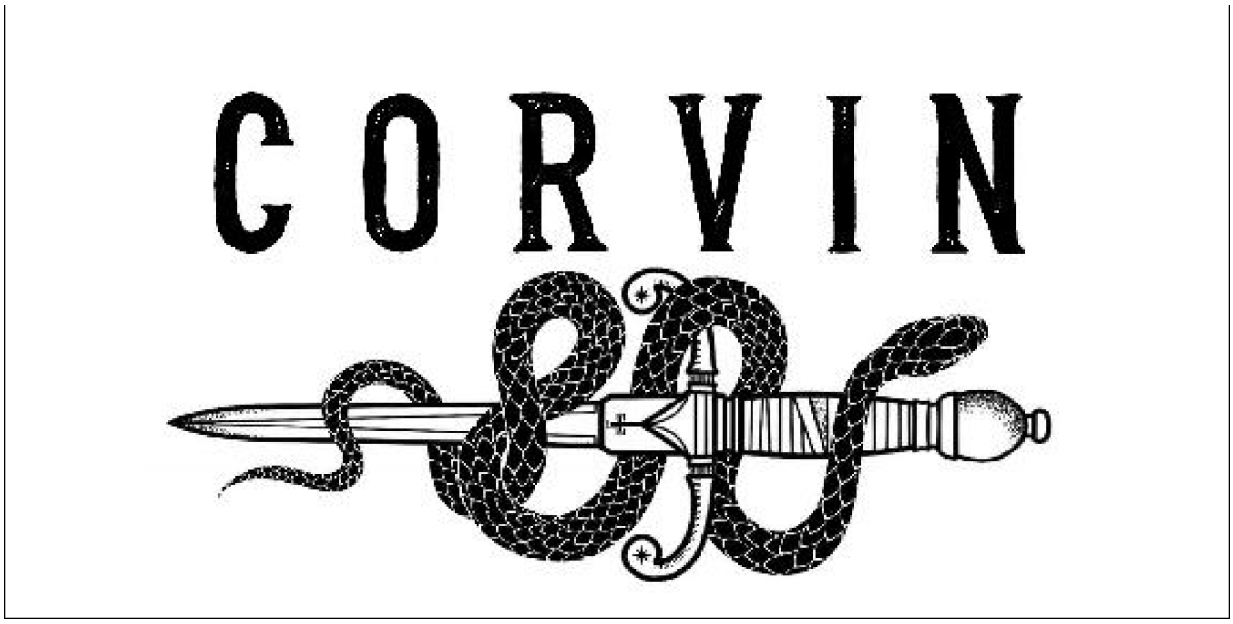
“I don’t like pain, why? You think I should get some?” He grinned and I shook my head.

“No, I like you just the way you are.” I stroked his face with the palm of my hand, “Plus It’s the only way I can tell you two apart.” I joked, looking over to Corvin before I tried to run away but Felix picked me up and threw me over his shoulder.

He smacked my butt, forcing a squeal out of me as he carried me out of the kitchen and through the hallway.

“I’ll show you how you can tell us apart. Let’s get packed up, shall we Mina?”

*OceanofPDF.com*




"Speaking of tattoos…that looks new." I pointed at Sonny's neck where he'd squeezed some new gibberish in what looked like elvish script in the little bit of blank space left.

"Fuck off." He moved his neck away from me and covered the new ink under his collar.

He was hiding something. It was probably her name. That would be fun to mess with.

I made a mental note to come back to it later when he wasn't feeling so… grief-stricken.

Yeah, it was hard to believe Sonny could feel anything at all sometimes, but I could tell Arlan's death was hitting him in some way. We were all feeling it. Even before he'd offed his own father, Arlan had been more of a paternal figure to him than Carmine Santorini could have ever been.

It didn't make him a *good* father figure, but he was a figure nonetheless. Frigid, hard, uncaring about anything if it wasn't for the sake of the Shrine.

Sonny had three meals in his belly but until we moved into that house nearly five years later, he was practically alone. Lessons at home every day with a private tutor and servants who cooked your meals but ate in separate rooms.

Felix and I were already teenagers when Arlan took us in, he'd already long given up on any hope that he could sculpt us into his image. But he knew Sonny would need someone he could trust when he took his place. So he bound us to each other before he'd even explained what it all meant.

I didn't regret it. I wouldn't take it back either if I had a choice.

We didn't.

Destined to not be able to live without one another. Not without pain at least. The kind of pain that eats away at your soul.

Without an heir, Sonny was the beacon of hope Arlan needed. His bloodline would die but his legacy would continue. What did that mean now with Romina in the picture?

It didn't take long to pack up all the things we cared about in that chapel. There wasn't much of it. There was a strong desire to burn it all down but Santorini advised against it. Until we knew how the future was going to play out for us it was better to keep attention at a minimum.

Once we arrived, she stood at the entrance of the estate. Eyes big with the kind of magic you only saw in children. Maybe she was right to be looking at this place like that. For us, it held nothing but cold and cruel memories. With Arlan dead, this was our home now, it was her home too. We would make it into something different.

"The lawyer is here," Sonny said, tucking his phone back in his pocket.

"Lawyer?" she asked.

“Death is a business transaction,” Felix said, looping her arm into his and walking her up the steps of the mansion.

I handed the key to the valet and grabbed one of Romina’s bags before I followed behind. It was no different inside than it had ever been before. No part of this gigantic monstrosity of a home actually felt Arlan’s absence. She walked through the gargantuan rooms with a deer-in-headlights sort of look, until finally we made our way to his office.

We were greeted by the floor to ceiling sized portrait of Arlan hanging behind his own desk. A tad too self-important if you asked me. But nobody asked me. In the painting he wore a black robe and held a skull in his right hand. The painting was from before Korina had even been born, but he was already an old man of fifty something in it. His young little trophy wife went missing soon after she birthed Korina but no one even batted an eye.

It seemed to be the curse of anyone who married into the bloodshed. *They* were the sacrifice needed for an offspring. They just didn’t know it.

“I just have a few papers I need you to sign.” She was a brunette in a pencil skirt, her hair was a messy rat's nest on top of her head, and she wore thin framed glasses on her nose.

She passed each one of us a stack of papers and began to shuffle them around while she pointed where the signatures were needed. I think her name was Amanda, but I really couldn’t remember. I usually got lost in my own thoughts anytime she came around to deal with Arlan’s shit.

“And you must be Romina.” She gave her a big smile but Romi looked to Felix anxiously, like Amanda couldn’t be trusted.

Maybe it was Ashley?

“It’s okay, Mina. Alyssa is here to help.” Close enough.

“These are for you.” She pulled a thick, green folder out from her leather briefcase and undid the rubber bands holding it together.

It was a lot of shit.

“Your grandfather put in a few stipulations to your portion of the inheritance as well as Sonny’s, but nothing unreasonable. Everything from his estates to his investments and equity will be yours but you will not have full access to it until you’ve finished formal schooling. You’ll receive an allowance until then.” She looked overwhelmed, flipping through the papers Artemis had given her.

Sonny was staring indifferently at his stack, with his arms crossed over his chest.

“What’s the old man making you do?” I asked him.

“Marry Romina.”

“What?” Came from Felix, the outrage clear in his voice.

“Huh?” she asked at the same time, completely confused.

I wasn’t surprised. It made sense the old man would want to unite the last living person in his bloodline to the person he’d groomed to succeed him.

But what did that mean for my brother and I?

Our inheritance had no stipulations. We were free to do what we wanted and live as we pleased. Yet somehow, it didn’t feel as untethered as I hoped it would. Now my future dangled under Arlan’s command like a marionette, my puppeteer was now nothing but ash and yet somehow still controlled the strings.

“He can’t do this, can he, Alyssa?” he asked the lawyer.

Felix looked positively pissed, not holding back his anger as he kicked an innocent wastebasket and spilled its contents out on the floor of the office. Romina’s eyes were glazed over like she was in another dimension, totally

unaware of what was going on around her in a state of pure dissociation. She slowly backed away towards the door.

“Little lamb?” I asked her.

“I-I just need a few minutes,” she said with a blank expression.

“Take all the time you need.” Amber told her before shifting her eyes back to my twin. “Unfortunately, he can Mr. Escura. There’s a no contest clause on the inheritance and if the conditions are not met the assets will not be distributed.”

“And what happens in that case?” Sonny asked.

“Then the church will escheat the assets and receive it all.”

“Well we can’t let that fucking happen,” I said with a scoff.

“I tried to advise Arlan that these stipulations were…controversial to say the least and that he was risking passing everything on to the very church he was trying so hard to bring down. But…” She sighed and Sonny interrupted.

“It was Arlan. Nobody could convince him of something if he didn’t want it. It was his way or no way. Even dead and gone and turned into a pile of dust. You did what you could Alyssa. We’ll do what needs to be done.” He pushed Romina’s signed papers towards the lawyer.

“We’ll call you if there’s anything we need, right now we need to help Romina…grieve.” I told her and she nodded, packing up her things back into her briefcase and seeing herself out.

We stayed there a while, just the three of us, frozen in time and wallowing in the aftermath of Arlan’s decisions.

“Fuck this!” Felix slammed his fist, and I dropped my hand to his shoulder for comfort.

“Don’t spiral from this. We’ll sort it all out,” I told him, looking over to Sonny hoping he’d provide some assurance as well but his gaze had turned cold.

“Where is she?” Sonny asked and Felix’s anger turned to concern.

“Romina?” We each called out into the open mansion, hoping to hear her response.

Nothing.

“Shit. what if she tried to leave?” Felix’s suggestion spread over all of us in a panic and we began calling her name louder, pacing faster throughout the empty mansion while trying to find her.

I turned the corner, and she was there. The glass terrarium was wide open and the snake coiled around her arm. Sonny and Felix came following behind, but I stuck out both my hands, slapping both their chests to stop them from going any further.

Because now there was a chance her end would come from the sharp end of venomous teeth.

*OceanofPDF.com*

I was getting flashes of a crucifix every time I blinked now. No longer just a figure in my dreams but intruding in my day-to-day life like a tether that wouldn't drop me. I was in a hazy fog when I walked out of that room, trying to piece together how my life had changed so drastically in the course of a couple of months.

Sometimes existence felt so disconnected. Like I was watching someone else live out my life and I was the passenger.

A voice broke through the fog.

"Don't fucking move Romina," Corvin whispered from behind and I shifted my eyes to find all three men frozen in place while they watched me.

The snake's tongue flickered against my fingertips before she decided to slither further up my forearm slowly coiling herself around me tighter. She seemed content with the heat of my skin and stayed put, squeezing her grip.

"What the fuck?" Felix whispered and Sonny hushed him sharply.

Her tongue flickered again like she was telling me some sort of joke and it reminded me of Laverne's stony sense of humor.

"You need to get her off your arm," Sonny said in a low, hushed voice.

"Why?" I asked bringing my arm to my face to inspect her up close.

All three men gasped in sync and the snake's licked me again.

"She could kill you." Corvin hissed.

I looked past my arm to find him staring at me with more fear in his eyes than I'd ever thought possible.

"So could you," I answered flatly and he side eyed me. "Would that be so bad?" I asked and he stepped forward.

She hissed and he froze.

I chuckled and she tightened around my arm again like she was getting comfortable, a new inside joke between us.

"As if there was ever a doubt who the fuck you were." Sonny sounded angry like I had a choice in any of this.

I placed my arm back in the terrarium and she arched her head up to a hanging branch, uncoiling herself off of me and onto the tree. I closed the glass door on the enclosure and before I could fully turn around Felix was standing there, in my space and far too close to me.

"Are you crazy?" He lifted my chin up to look at me as if to examine whether I was alright or insane.

"I didn't know she was dangerous. Why would any reasonable person have a venomous snake in their home, in an unlocked enclosure?" I asked and he opened his mouth to argue but hesitated.

"You think Arlan Black was a reasonable person?" he asked. "Medusa is one angry bitch, she practically spits venom. I don't know how the fuck you did that."

“I didn’t do anything.” I laughed. “And her name is *not* Medusa.”

“Well, she’s yours now, along with the rest of this place.”

“Why would he give all of this to me? He didn’t know me. I don’t get it.” I asked, rubbing my arms anxiously at the idea of all of this being mine.

“Because you were his family,” Felix said.

“Because of guilt,” Sonny added.

“Because he knows the three of us have enough and you have nothing. It was always meant to be yours,” Corvin finished.

I knew all three were pieces of the truth. Would Arlan Black have been a doting, loving grandfather? Would I have grown up to be a different person had I grown under his wing? Would I be hard and distant the way he’d made Sonny?

“So what does this mean?” I asked them.

“It means you’re one of us. It means you belong with us, and not Frollo. You never have. You should have grown up alongside us. Hell, you’d probably be with one of us by now,” Felix said.

“Just one of you?” I asked and Corvin chuckled.

“I guess we’ll never know now,” he answered, soothing a fraction of the worry that crept up at the idea that there was a reality somewhere that I didn’t have all three of them.

And then I looked over to Sonny realizing that I was living that reality.

“I don’t want it,” I told them and Felix shook his head at me.

“It’s already yours, he left it all to you.” He pulled out the piece of paper from his pocket with the words the lawyer kept repeating.

None of it made any sense.

*I leave everything to my granddaughter and heir, Romina Black.*

My eyes filled up with tears and they blurred my vision before dropping heavily onto the paper. I made out a few words but what stuck out was my name, written multiple times throughout. Romina Black.

Romina Black.

Romina Black.

I had always been Romina, but now my name had a weight to it, an anchor to hold me steady as I fronted the world face first.

“You scared of living now that you finally get the chance to be free?” Sonny was baiting me, and I clenched my jaw to keep myself from answering in a way that I’d regret.

Corvin noticed the way my nostrils flared.

He noticed everything.

“What’s the deal with you two? Why are you making each other miserable?” he asked and Sonny crossed his arms over his chest and huffed. “Have you not noticed?” he said to his brother.

“I mean everyone’s weird around Sonny.” He shrugged but Corvin didn’t let up and I shrunk back with embarrassment.

“Yeah, except she’s avoiding him all to hell, always looking like a puppy that just got kicked, and he’s not doing whatever weird shit it is he does to her. Has she left your room at night? Do you hear her screaming at two in the morning anymore?” He pointed out the obvious and I looked down, avoiding all of their eyes.

“Hmm.” Felix hummed out loud.

“So what is it, little lamb? Cuz this asshole sure as shit isn’t opening up. Did Sonny hurt your pride? He lyin’ to you about how he feels?” My head shot up with his questions, betraying any attempt I had to stay in control.

Corvin knew me too well, and he knew Sonny even better.

“Just fucking tell her Sonny,” Felix said exhaustedly.

Sonny’s gaze was bitter.

“He can’t.” I lost control and a tear rolled down my cheek.

“You have everything you could want now, you don’t need us, if you aren’t happy then take your money and go.” he spat out venomously, his words were like a blow to my heart.

Corvin snorted from behind and whispered, “There it is,” to his brother like he was amused.

“Why do you enjoy seeing me broken down?” The tears began to cascade freely down my face as I lost my resolve to stay strong.

“Because this is when I want you the most,” Sonny said with an icy dark tone as he stepped close to me, ignoring the snake’s warning while she hissed angrily behind the glass. “When you’re vulnerable, when you’re raw and cracked wide open for me to see all your faults and who you really are.” He wiped the next tear before it could fall. “Because sometimes when it hurts, it’s best to cut it open to get rid of all the pain.”

He hooked his arm around my waist to pull me in close to him, his chest pressed against mine before he took my chin into his hand and sealed his lips to mine.

“I want to know that you’re desperate for me,” he said, a glowing look to his eyes that I hadn’t seen before.

“You know I am,” I whispered out but he frowned.

“Do I?”

“Just tell her why you’re scared. Why are you toying with her?” Corvin asked him but he scoffed.

“Toying with her? You want me to bear my soul to someone who doesn’t even know how to do the same? How am I supposed to trust she’s not going

to go back to him every time she gets scared of what real life is like?" His fear slammed straight into my chest, leaving me breathless.

I had done absolutely nothing to earn their loyalty, their allegiance.

But yet somehow they'd granted me their care, their protection, their attention.

It suddenly occurred to me that I'd been dying to hear him say something I myself couldn't construct into words. I'd given nothing in return.

"I realize that." I raised my chin up to look him in the eyes, wiping some of the heart break from my expression with the realization of what I'd been asking of him.

"You want me to get on my knees and tell you I like you Pet? Well I won't. I didn't say it then and I won't say it now and you sure as shit won't ever hear it coming out of my mouth."

"I will," I said, dropping to my knees. "How can I prove to you that this is it for me? How can I prove to you that I trust you?"

A dark shadow passed over his eyes and his voice turned cold.

"Maybe next time you throw yourself to the wolves you'll trust my judgment when you have to put your life in someone else's hands." His upper lip peeled up.

"I don't want to wait for that. You said you wanted my death. Take it." I pulled my shoulders back and looked up at him through my eyelashes.

He laughed.

Always sounded so sinister out of his mouth.

Unhinged.

"Is this what you fucking want from me?" He grabbed my hair at the top of my scalp and pulled me up, slamming me against his chest.

“Yes.” He narrowed his eyes at me like he didn’t believe me, like he was trying to find the lie.

“Let’s play a game then.” He was looking past me like he was waiting for an Escura to object.

“A game?” My voice came out shakier than I intended.

“A game. Let’s put your faith to the test.” The smile only reached his eyes and his lips remained pressed into a flat line.

“What are you cooking up you psycho?” Corvin probed, more concern than playfulness in his tone but he ignored him, pulling me by the hand and leading me further into Arlan’s home.

My home now.

“You want to prove that you trust me?” He softly pulled a strand of my hair between my fingers like it was a cigarette and drug it down until it slipped out of his hold.

I wanted to tell him that I didn’t know it would hurt him. How could I have possibly known that I meant anything to him? Because I’d meant nothing to the man who raised me, the closest thing to family that I knew.

“I do.”

The muscle in his jaw bulged. He clenched his molars down so tight I thought I’d be able to hear his teeth crack.

“Your death then, I’m ready to collect.” He released his grip from my hair and looked me up and down.

“The game?” I whispered, not letting him show how my hands trembled in anticipation.

“Let’s see how far your trust goes.”

It was like he was looking for something in *me*, but the truth was that it was the easiest way to see into *his* soul. Without another word he walked

out, leaving me with Felix and Corvin. They eyed me curiously. Worried looks on both their faces but the three of us knew that I'd made up my mind and Sonny was calling the shots here.

This was Mordor.

He stormed back in holding a large rope and dragging a tall stool along the marble floors.

"Say you won't leave me again," he said while walking past me, setting the stool down in the middle of the room.

"You know that I won't Sonny." I stepped towards him, but he climbed up the stool instead.

"What the fuck are you up to?" Felix asked, walking towards us but Sonny pulled the gun out of the back of his pants.

"Stay the fuck away," he told him, and Felix put his hands up in the air. "This is between me and her."

He glanced over at me like he was hoping to see me shake from the threat. The idea was almost laughable but I didn't let him know.

He couldn't live without those two.

"Say it." I glanced over to see Corvin taking a seat and crossing his arms over his chest like he was anxious.

"I won't leave you."

He put the glock back in his pocket once Felix stepped back, hands still raised but content enough that the situation was more psychotic than dangerous. He wrapped the rope skillfully around his hands, fashioning a noose and hanging it over the beam on the ceiling.

"Up." He gestured to the stool after getting down himself.

I didn't hesitate, despite the way Felix's gaze burned into me.

“Put the rope around your neck, Romina,” he demanded but both Escuras began to question him, Corvin standing and Felix approaching again.

He pulled the gun out of his pants once more as their voices escalated, arguing over each other and he pointed at one of the twins.

“Stop!” I told both Escuras and they went silent at my plea. “It’s okay.”

This was for him.

But it was for me too.

We both needed this. He craved my surrender, my submission, and now that I was here with that rope around my neck, I knew I craved all of those things too. His possession, his control, his protection. They were one in the same.

“Pull the knot down, so it’s nice and tight around your neck.” He mimicked the gesture with his own hands, showing me how to tighten the rope.

“Carmine.” Corvin growled out and Sonny bared his teeth briefly in annoyance.

“Jump, Pet.”

“No!”

“No!” Both Escuras screamed, lurching forward at the same time but I stepped off anyway.

I hovered.

Dangling.

All the sound gone from my ears.

The burn of the rope around my neck came before I had a chance to notice I wasn’t breathing. The sharp pain around my throat and the pressure in my eyes lasted only a second before I felt the rope around my neck loosen and my feet touch the ground.

I scrambled backwards like a crab, pulling the rope off and filling my lungs up with air. It was obnoxiously loud but I couldn’t control it. It felt like my chest was hollow and would never be full again. I looked over at him, his hands trembled with the cut end of the rope.

“I'll be the one who gets to decide when you die, Romina. Not Frollo, not God, no one else. I’ll bear the burden of your fears, your hatred, your sorrow. Not just your happiness. You’re safe with me because I’m the one who names that day, because it’ll be the day I choose to go too.” My lungs still burned desperately for a full inhale. “I wanted to tear you down, to rebuild you in *my* image and destroy everything that Frollo’s hands had a part in building.”

“You’re fucking insane! Are you kidding me?” Felix shouted, but we both ignored him.

“I was just as bad as *him* for it. I was wrong. You’re perfect exactly how you are.” He was crouched down to my eye level, but he was a few feet away, keeping his distance.

“I don’t like you, Pet,” he told me again, and I tensed from the wound he kept picking at until it threatened to fester and rot a part of me. “Because liking someone is an immature feeling. It’s simple. There’s nothing about you that’s simple Romina Black. Like doesn’t come close to how I feel about you, you fucking stubborn little shit.”

“I’m fucking lost over you. I don’t know who I am when you’re not around and I’m so addicted to you that you’re all I dream about. You’re all I fucking think about every second of the damn day. I fucking loathe your existence more than anything in this world because there’s nothing that scares me more than the idea of waking up and you not being there anymore. That this was all just some dream. And I’m supposed to just hope

this is forever? Live off the faith that you won't just wake up one morning and go back to the only thing you've ever known? Go back to that monster? That's fucking terrifying Romina. You're all I fucking want. You're all I have." The room went quiet.

I didn't even blink.

I don't think any of us could have.

It would have been too loud, and the spell would have been broken.

Because Sonny's words were the kind of magic that was so rare that if you missed it, you might never get to experience it again.

I pulled my knife out of the holster and bit down on the handle of the blade, crawling to him slowly on all fours. He eyed me suspiciously once I'd gotten so close to him that he was forced to lean back on his elbows.

*Was he scared of me?*

An amusing thought.

I crawled on top of him and wrapped my wrist around his throat, pushing his back down to the ground. I pulled the knife out of my mouth. "You're all I have too," I said to him before looking up at the twins still standing back. "All of you." I dragged the knife through the middle of his shirt, ripping apart the buttons and exposing his chest.

"Why does it hurt so much?" I asked, a tear falling from my eye onto his chest.

"That's how you know it's love, when it's painful to exist outside of that person. When breathing becomes a chore when they aren't around," Felix said from the side and I looked down to find Sonny's eyes blazing into me.

Those clear blue pools somehow brighter than they'd ever been. I grazed my thumb over the vertical scar in the center of his chest. The one that had

been there before me. It felt electrifying to the touch and a heady type of energy filled me from the contact alone.

“Why would anyone want to feel this way?” I asked, digging the point of the blade onto the half of Sonny’s chest that was already scarred by my hands.

“Because it means you’re alive. It means you’re not alone,” Corvin said from behind him.

“Cut it open to get rid of the pain?” I asked him..

“Do it. But when you do it, know you won’t ever be alone again, love,” Sonny whispered.

I pressed down, dragging the tip of the blade against his perfect flesh, he hissed, keeping his eyes open and fixed on mine the entire time. His erection grew under me, hardening straight into the scorching heat between my legs. I continued to cut, slowly curving around the X that had been marred over his heart.

“Oh, fuck. Romina.” He groaned between labored breaths, digging his fingers into my hips and grinding against me.

I lifted the blade and worked on the other half, curving around the other side of the X and joining the rest of the new wound with a pointed tip. A heart. It bled freely and I wiped my finger over the crimson liquid before inserting it into my mouth. He moaned again.

“You’re both actually insane,” Felix said in disbelief.

“Why do you think she keeps coming back to me?” Sonny said with a smile.

“Because I think I’m insane too,” I answered.

“You are. You’re shaped to our madness.”

The kiss started out as a need and grew into a desperate plea. His lips were firm and his tongue ravaged inside my mouth while his hands moved in a frenzy, as if he wasn't sure which part of me he wanted to feel but he couldn't stop to decide.

His large hands palmed my butt cheeks as he lifted me off the floor while he stood, his erection pressed into me while he shoved his tongue into my mouth. He walked until we were pressed against the glass enclosure once again. The snake hissed angrily at the disturbance, but he just crushed me against the glass wall in response. I moaned out a desperate sound while his hands continued to explore my body.

I heard a throat clear and my eyes jarred open to find our audience had no intention of leaving.

"W-wait, Sonny." He fisted his hand in my hair and slammed my head back against the glass.

"Ah!" I cried.

There was a small cracking sound.

"No. You wanted this, didn't you?" He pressed his erection so firmly onto me that all I could do was grind against him.

He grunted in my ear.

"Y-yeah but…" My eyes darted over to Corvin and Felix standing behind him, smirks painted on their faces while they shamelessly watched.

Sonny's lip drew up into a twisted half smile.

"Let them watch. I've waited long enough, you're mine right now." He tore my panties to the side plunging his fingers inside me with no mercy, one hand still holding my thigh up and keeping me lifted off the ground.

The glass made chipping sounds again and I could feel Sonny's growl vibrating straight from his throat into my mouth. He pulled his fingers out

of me and held me up against him while walking me back into the ballroom. The twins followed but kept their distance. I laced my arms around his neck and kissed him deeper, the desire inside of me creating an urge to sink my teeth into his full lips.

I didn't fight it.

"Did you just fucking bite me?" he asked, an astonished look on his face.

I nodded, purposefully baiting him while I licked the beads of blood from his lip. He dropped me down onto the velvet daybed, but I didn't release my hold from his neck, pulling him down with me. His fingers found my center again, making circles and spreading my arousal over my clit before he plunged them deep inside of me.

"Look at me," his deep voice commanded and our eyes found each other.

I was hooked onto his gaze, and the room was too quiet. There was just the messy sound of his fingers working their way in and out of me in that same aggressive pace he always used with everything he did. It was rough, uncaring, and somehow always made me explode faster and harder than anything else could.

His eyes stayed narrowed onto mine and once he inserted a third finger and curled them upwards, I seized in his hold.

"Ah! Ah! Ahhh!" I cried out in ecstasy, through each wave of pleasure that struck me down like lightning.

I was still very much clinging to his neck even while he lowered his head to lick up the mess between my legs. Then all of a sudden the same three fingers found their way into my mouth. I could hear him fumbling with his zipper over me and there was an overwhelming heat coming from the direction where I knew two Escuras had been watching everything.

"Suck." I closed my lips around his fingers.

He pulled them out of my mouth with a pop and grabbed my hair, using it to guide me less than gently onto the floor and on my knees.

“Hands on your thighs,” he commanded me before pulling my jaw open and shoving his thick, hard erection inside my mouth. “Cover your teeth.”

I obeyed, licking my lips before wrapping them around my teeth. He brought my head to him, filling my mouth with his length. It was slow and methodical at first, making the deep need in my core grow.

I clenched my thighs, moaning with each thrust of his hips against my lips. He hit the back of my throat with every slam and I labored against the urge to gag. He was so big he filled my mouth up to the point where I was practically suffocating and I couldn’t catch a breath.

“Relax your fucking throat Romina,” Sonny gritted out.

He used my mouth, moving back and forth while involuntary tears fell down the sides of my face. I struggled to inhale, clenching my thighs together with an aching need I’d never relieve on my own.

“That mouth is perfect,” he said with a sigh.

I reached my hands up to hold him by the hips while he got closer and closer to his release. The sloppy sound of my gagging was soon drowned out by his grunts of pleasure. Salty hot cum shot into the back of my throat before he pulled out of my mouth. A string of drool mixed with his cum stuck to my lip as he stepped away.

He lifted me off my knees and sat back on the chaise, straddling me over his erection. He leaned forward to whisper in my ear.

“I’ve never done this before.”

My eyes widened with shock and that expression grew tenfold once he pulled my hips down, impaling me on his length.

A bolt of pleasure struck my spine each time he pulled out of me completely and then slammed back into me again. Sonny was impossibly large, but I never expected him to feel this way.

I gasped, my cheeks were wet from my watery eyes but he didn't bother to wipe them. His hands were far too busy, one roamed north cupping a breast before moving its way to my throat. The other other hand moved from my hip and toyed around the entrance of my puckered hole. I dropped my head back with a groan while he teased. I closed my eyes, relishing the feeling until his fingers were gone.

It was a dark throaty chuckle that rumbled from his chest into my ears. Then there was the sound of the bottle of lube and there were his fingers sliding through the tight ring. I moaned, sinking my hips down to meet him.

"Fuck." He breathed into my ear. "I can't believe I waited this long to get inside of you."

"Sonny," I moaned at the feeling of him filling me up completely.

I ground my hips against him, fighting for my release. Every time his hips raised, he pulled me down harder against him. I grunted and moaned unintelligible noises with each thrust, going insane with the feeling of him.

"Turn her around, I wanna see." I could hear the mischief in Felix's voice, reminding me we weren't alone.

Sonny wasn't one to take directions, but he didn't seem to mind this time. He spun me around while still keeping me on him, the change in position only making him hit an even deeper spot inside of me. I gripped his thighs, digging my nails into his legs while I dropped my head back onto his chest with every thrust.

"Does Sonny's cock feel like everything you dreamed it would, little lamb?" Corvin asked, and I bit my lip to avoid answering.

I closed my eyes tighter, focusing on the feeling of Sonny pounding into me wildly but instead he grabbed my chin and forced my head straight.

“Eyes open. I want to hear you answer him,” he commanded before he released and dropped his hand back down to my hip.

“Yes,” I whimpered, nodding my head and watching the smile grow on Corvin’s face.

“Does it feel good when he’s in your ass and stretching that pretty pussy at the same time?” His words made me flush with heat, forcing my arousal to flood down my legs.

It was an obnoxious symphony of pleasure. When I hesitated answering, Sonny thrusted his fingers harder, pushing against that thin layer that separated him from himself inside of me.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” I screamed the chant before collapsing onto Sonny, shaking while my orgasm took everything out of me, and I gushed onto his lap.

Sonny pulled his fingers out from inside of me, holding my hips with both hands and drilling into me senselessly until he climaxed as well, filling me up with his cum even while I continued to drip my own release on him.

“What did you just say?” He grabbed my chin to turn my head back towards him.

He was smiling.

So was I.

“Fuck, you’re a messy, dirty girl aren’t you, little lamb?” Corvin said from the side and I tensed, even my heavy panting came to a stop when I froze.

“Don’t.” Sonny warned him with a growl, stroking my hair gently and pulling me into the nook of his shoulder. “She doesn’t like that.” He spoke

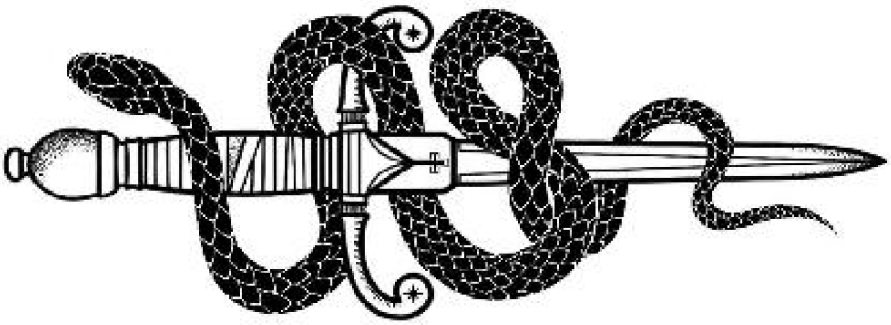
for me.

“Come show me what you like then, little lamb,” he said with a soft smile.

I went to lift up but Sonny dug his fingers into my hip to keep me impaled on him. “I could literally live like this, inside you, every moment of the fucking day,” He whispered into my ears and Corvin chuckled.

“Well, despite what the old man said, she belongs with all of us. So learn to share Santorini.” Corvin took long strides before crouching down and kissing me.

*OceanofPDF.com*



# SONNY

“I want to bind myself to you three. Please don’t make me ask again,” she said looking at me and then past my shoulders to the Escuras.

She hadn’t just read the book, she studied it.

“Do you understand what that means?” I asked her.

“I do.”

Did she? It wasn’t a love spell. It amplified what was already there. When you bound yourself to someone it was physically painful to be apart from them. It was why the three of us were the way we were. Arlan had forced us to do the ritual when the Escuras moved in as teenagers, though for us it was much different, our love was based on friendship and loyalty.

Her love was wild.

It was sharp and full of edges, and I often found myself on the bleeding end of her blade.

“Are you sure?” I asked softly in her ear, so that it was just between the two of us.

“I’ve never been more sure of anything.”

“Once you do this, it isn’t some devil who will possess your soul. It’s us.”

“Who better than the ones who already own my heart?” She parted her lips for me and I sank my tongue into her mouth with a groan.

I pulled her off of me and Corvin was already walking back into the room with a towel and tossing it at us. I smirked. She was a messy girl but I fucking loved every bit of it.

“The basement,” I told Felix, who nodded, knowing exactly what would need to happen.

“You’re sure you want this Romina?” Corvin asked her, not bothering to wait for her to make herself fully decent before plunging his tongue down her throat.

“You’re all the home I want. You’re all the home I need.” She said with a nod of her head.

I pulled her back into my lap once I put my pants back on, nuzzling my nose into her hair and breathing her in. Corvin turned and headed downstairs as well to get things ready for the ritual.

Hundreds of candles flickered. Boundaries were drawn on the floor from a mixture of mine, Felix, and Corvin’s blood making a circle. Felix emptied the jar filled with grave dirt into the center and drew the sigil for the ritual in it. Thirteen candles surrounded us but remained unlit.

She breathed heavily and her hands shook with the blade while Corvin held a small wooden bowl under her arm. It already contained our blood, now it needed hers. She looked at me with a gaze full of nothing but love. How she could see past the monster that was inside of all of us, how she could heal us as well as herself even though the reality was, she was the most damaged one of us all was beyond me.

“Don’t be scared Mina. Tell her to be brave, Sonny,” Felix said, looking back at me. I shook my head as I uncrossed my arms and kicked my foot off one of the pillars holding the mansion up right above us. Stepping closer, I knelt down in front of her, grasping her chin with my fingers.

“No, I don’t want her brave. I want her wide-eyed and baptized in my sins like it’s dirty bathwater,” I said, not bothering to explain myself.

She didn’t need to be anything that she wasn’t. That’s not who she was, and that was okay. It took too long for me to realize that. I wouldn’t make the mistake again.

“Steady your hand and press hard. If you don’t cut deep enough you’ll need to do it again.”

Without saying anymore, she nodded her head, bright eyes burning straight into my heart. The trembling in her hand settled. She drug the blade of the knife against her forearm and the stream oozed out easily. Felix squeezed, urging the blood out into the container. Her eyes glazed over with a dark shadow.

Satan himself would have kneeled at the sight of her.

“Orocai Nesrept Satanas. Lumac visal.” We chanted the words in sync.

Eleven, twelve, then thirteen times.

Immediately every candle in the circle lit, and she drew the symbols on our chest one by one before drawing it on herself. The wax of the candles

melted rapidly and I immediately felt the pull to her strengthen. She crawled towards me on all four, her eyes a stormy blue so deep it reminded me of the darkest depths of the ocean.

She would be ours forever.

And we were hers.

Instead of pulling her up, I knelt on the ground, grabbing at the front of her dress and ripping it down the middle. Rubbing my hand down her chest, I smeared the blood over her hardened nipples and she whimpered loud enough to incite a growl deep from within my chest. I tore at my own shirt, fashioning the fabric into a bandage and wrapping her wound with it.

I trailed my hand over her breasts, circling my fingers over her nipples until her head dropped back and she moaned. On cue, the twins approached from behind her, so that the three of us surrounded her from all angles.

She exhaled nervously.

Corvin pulled her arms behind her, forcing a squeal out from her throat as he tightened his hold on her wrists, lifting her chin up with a forceful touch. I held back the urge to reach for her. I wasn't in a rush, I would join them later. The truth was I had the perfect view to lean back and watch the show.

Felix's hand slid over her pussy before his fingers disappeared between her thighs and a quiet moan left her mouth.

"Open your legs little lamb, show Sonny how wet that pretty cunt is." Corvin had barely said it before deciding to take action on his own, scooping her right leg up so that her knee was folded over his forearm.

Like a good brother, Felix followed suit lifting up her other leg and hitching the knee over his own arm. She was sitting on both their laps and completely exposed to me, her pussy dripping in anticipation and I was salivating at the thought of being inside her again tonight.

“Fuck her Felix,” I instructed and he looked more than happy to oblige.

Corvin lifted her up and within moments Felix was lowering her onto the thickness of his veiny shaft. She whimpered while he teased her, only dropping her down an inch or two at a time, forcing her to circle her hips in frustration.

“Eat her until she’s sobbing,” I said, looking over at Corvin and tilting my forehead her way.

“You don’t gotta ask me twice.” He smirked.

Felix lowered down onto his back taking Romina with him. She cried out a soft moan at the change in position. Felix was still not daring to fill her up all the way but her glistening cunt was now exposed for Corvin to access more easily. He wrapped his fingers around both her hips and pressed the flat of his tongue over her clit, swirling and tangling through the bundle of nerves until she was so close to coming undone.

“Please! Please!” She begged.

I nodded in encouragement to the younger Escura.

He thrusted the full length of his thick erection inside of her, her loud screams bouncing off the walls of the basement and likely echoing throughout the mansion. Felix gripped her chin and positioned it so that her gaze would fall straight on mine.

“Open your eyes,” I commanded her and those bright blue orbs shined back at me.

She bounced up and down with every thrust of Felix’s hips, her beautiful tits moving with each slam. They continued their torture until she came undone in their arms, her eyes not straying once from mine. I leaned forward to touch her. She was still bleeding, a red spot stained the bandage wrapped around her arm, but it would let up soon. My chest wasn't any

better off. She ran her hand against her artwork, smearing the drying blood over my chest before dragging what was left over her own face.

She smiled at me but in this light it looked nearly malicious.

Such a disordered kind of sweetness.

I pulled her face close to mine and whispered in her ear.

*OceanofPDF.com*

“You did so good, Pet,” Sonny said while Felix’s lips trailed down my neck in slow, tender kisses.

I sighed and he stepped back to lean against the wall once more.

“Do you want us to reward you?” Corvin asked, moving his hand down between my legs to my clit, rubbing back and forth with his fingers while he used my own arousal against me like a weapon.

I arched my back, my core burning with a need for release. The spell left me feeling this throbbing need I didn’t know how to satisfy. I looked to Sonny for answers but he had a predatory expression on his face. A look that should have scared me, but for some reason tonight I feared nothing.

Felix plunged three fingers deep inside my ass, and I mewled loudly. “Yes,” I answered his question knowing that when they worked together like this, they always had a way of bringing parts out of me that I couldn’t even comprehend myself.

“Should we reward you together, Romi?” Corvin lifted his face up from between my legs.

Once he lifted up I became extremely aware that I’d found myself pressed in the middle of an Escura sandwich.

It was the kind of feeling that consumed me like a deluge. Swallowing up weak infrastructure and destroying cultures without a care for the damage it left behind.

I bit my lip as I slowly nodded my response.

“Yes. Please,” I begged quietly and he grabbed my neck from behind, pulling me in close as our lips locked in a hurried frenzy.

I could feel the hardness of his erection pressed up against me, straining through his pants even while I was impaled on his twin. I ran a hand over his bulge, squeezing at the feel of his thickness already throbbing for me.

“Settle down lamb,” he groaned, pulling away from our kiss. “You keep doing that and I’m gonna cum in my pants, and I want to cum inside you. Got it?”

I let go of him and reached down to touch myself, attempting to use whatever friction I could to relieve a desire inside of me that felt insatiable.

“Does it feel like you’re on fire?” Sonny asked, leaning against the wall as he watched his best friends have their way with me. Felix continued to pull his fingers in and out of my tightest hole with a rhythm that was so steady I thought my eyes were going to roll right out of my head.

I nodded my response.

I immediately regretted it once I realized who I was talking to.

“If you’re not going to use that mouth to answer me when I talk to you, I’m going to stuff it with my cock. Is that clear, Pet?” he asked me. “Or is that what you want?”

I almost went to nod my head again but caught myself before I could get in any more trouble, but maybe that was exactly what I wanted to do right now.

“Y-yes,” I cried out, Felix’s fingers raking along inside me, making me well aware of just how full I was.

Corvin’s fingers found my hands, working to assist me in my undoing. He built up that tension, just barely teasing my clit with his thumb and nearly sending me over the edge, but stopping just before.

“Please!” I cried out to both of them, begging for release, but It was Sonny’s eyes I was locked onto.

“Yes what? You want me to stuff my cock in your mouth?” He smirked, but he wasn’t ready for my answer when I moaned out another yes with my climax, forcing Corvin to hold me up as I unraveled into a boneless mess in his arms.

But I was still on fire.

He chuckled.

“You like it when Sonny say’s filthy shit to you, little lamb?” Corvin asked, not giving me time to answer before lifting me off of his brother. He slung me over his shoulder, slapping my bare cheek hard enough to momentarily temper the raging heat searing inside of me.

He took the steps up two or three at a time until he got to the top, kicking the door open and making a b-line for the shower inside one of the mansion’s many bedrooms.

He placed me down on my feet, and before I could wonder if Sonny and Felix would be following, they were already there, standing behind Corvin. Three dark, protective shadows, with their promise to always keep me safe.

We’d toyed the line between danger and reason so many times.

Sonny had said it himself, he wanted my death.

Now he'd had it.

And I'd die a million more times for him if that's what it would take to feel as whole as I felt right at this moment.

They were everything that I had been missing.

Corvin reached over me, turning the shower into a hot mist and suddenly they were all three reaching for me, pulling the remnants of tattered dress sleeves and my underwear off my body. They followed suit, removing their clothes before surrounding me again in the spray of the shower.

Felix lathered me up slowly, the eucalyptus of the soap keeping me focused on the present even though my head was in a daze. Their hands washed me, each one taking their turn with a different body part as they cleansed the blood off of me.

*Our blood*.

The water shut off, freeing me from my thoughts just as Felix closed his mouth around mine. I could feel the soft smile forming on the corner of his lips as he trailed his thumb down my side slowly.

Sonny cleared his throat from behind him, toweling himself off. The monster between his legs wide awake and promising sweet violence. He didn't miss the way my eyes lingered when our gazes crossed.

"You're keeping her from what she wants," he said, his voice full of husky darkness that was unmatched.

Felix pushed me into the corner of the shower, placing both his hands on either side of my head as he boxed me in. A mischievous grin spread widely through his face before he opened his mouth to speak.

"Brother, she wants it all." He dropped to his knees and lifted my right foot up onto his shoulder.

His tongue dove straight into my center, making swirling motions and sucking that charged up bundle of nerves into his mouth, forcing me to cry out desperately. I grabbed a fistful of his hair into my hands.

He pulled back with a crooked smirk, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand before walking out of the bathroom, leaving me with that burning ache inside of me that felt like an unquenchable thirst.

Corvin extended his hand out to me, tilting his chin towards the door of the bathroom as if to beckon me out, so I took it. I followed him into one of the bedrooms, all three men waiting for me to make a move.

I looked between the three of them, waiting for an invitation of sorts.

“Come sit on my lap, little lamb.” Corvin sat on the leather chaise lounge, leaning back into it comfortably.

I obeyed eagerly, walking over to him, droplets of water rolling freely down my body and dripping onto the floor.

I stood over him and he grabbed each of my hands in his. I straddled over his legs, propping my knees on the chaise, hovering over his erection.

“Fuck him, my pet.” Sonny’s dark voice commanded from a shadow in the corner.

I had no business arguing.

I lowered down onto Corvin, feeling the stretch of his thick, veiny shaft filling me up completely from the inside. I moaned loudly, trying to adjust to his size but he didn’t give me the chance before he lifted me up and slammed me down into him again, forcing a guttural groan from deep within me.

Every thrust of his hips filled me up, stretching me and drawing out pleasure from me. My grip tightened around his shoulders and I dug my nails into his skin feeling my core tightening sooner than I expected.

“Oh fuck!” I cursed as I spasmed and unraveled with him inside of me, still pounding furiously.

They all three chuckled.

“Are you still burning, Pet?” Sonny asked, as if he knew exactly what was coursing through my body right now.

“Yes! Please. I need more.” It was a desperate plea, my eyes not wavering from Sonny’s enrapturing gaze.

I needed more, I needed everything. I needed to feel all of them in order to feel whole.

He barely tilted his chin, but it was enough for Felix to see it for what it was.

He extended his palm to Sonny who reached into his pocket again, pulling out the bottle of lube and handing it over. He squirted it onto his hands, rubbing his fingers through the liquid before coating my puckered hole with it.

He teased his fingers over the rim, pulling a shudder from deep within me. Doing that thing they always did, they had an entire conversation without even speaking and Corvin slowed his rhythm down to an achingly slow pace while Felix plunged one finger through and then another.

“Oh! Felix!” I cried out.

Corvin slammed into me again, threatening another orgasm to come to the surface.

My eyes once again found Sonny’s, his hand holding his erection in his hand as if he were some sort of Olympic God and it were a trophy. He stroked up and down so slowly I could barely make out the movements, his eyes never wandering from mine despite the obscenities going on around us.

“Still burning?” he asked again with that dark smirk.

“What did you do to me?” I gasped out as another orgasm took me by surprise. The Earth-shattering waves coursing through me while I held on to Corvin’s forearms, my nails still digging into his skin as he thrusted upwards.

Felix chuckled, only pulling his fingers out of me once my climax had finally wound down to a tolerable murmur. “He didn’t do anything, you did. It’s the spell. It just heightens things, feelings, emotions, *needs*.”

“Well, I need you. All of you,” I declared, finding the strength in me to voice out what I wanted for once in my life.

“Maybe I do like you brave, Romina,” Sonny said, his voice coated in surprise. “But you might regret that.” He kicked off the wall and made his way over to me.

“In her ass, now,” he commanded Felix, who wrapped his hand around my throat for leverage as he pressed the tip of his head to my behind.

I felt the cold of the lube while he slickened it over me generously, not failing to thrust his fingers again for good measure, eliciting another moan from me.

I clenched, forcing a desperate noise from Corvin, who was still deep inside of me.

“You know your safeword,” Sonny reminded me.

“Y-yes.” I nodded through a rasp, my throat still under Felix’s tight hold, and as if I had been speaking to him, my confirmation was all the approval he needed to push the wide head of his thick length inside my ass.

“Oh G—” I tried to cry out but Sonny stole my head from his best friend’s hold and clutched a ball of my hair in his fist. He stuffed himself so

deep inside my throat, so hard and fast that I barely had time to try to keep my teeth out of the way or swirl my tongue over the tip.

“Well, I guess you can’t really use it right now.” His laugh came out like a haunting sound.

It was the distraction I needed, because once Felix bottomed out, I felt like I was going to split open from the inside. With both him and Corvin inside of me, it was just too much. Too full in every way possible. I didn’t think I could ever get used to it.

“My good girl.” Sonny smiled down at me in approval, his cock still buried deep down my throat but his thumb grazing gently down my jaw. He used it to wipe the slobber dripping down my chin.

Corvin gripped my hips confidently and moved out of me slowly, holding me in place on top of him. I cried out, dropping Sonny from my mouth to make room for a blissful scream.

“I wasn’t done with you.” Sonny turned my chin back to the side and I opened up, wrapping my lips over my teeth and letting him have his way with me.

Then Felix’s fingers were there, inching their way between my legs. He swirled his fingers around in a circle through the slickness, Corvin never once slowing down in between thrusts while Sonny continued to use my mouth for his own pleasure.

And then it hit me like a bolt of lightning, and if I hadn’t been sitting on Corvin’s lap, my legs would have given out underneath me from how intense every wave of pleasure struck me. I scraped my nails across Corvin’s chest, drawing a few beadlets of blood where the skin broke and I howled my climax out as if I’d been possessed.

Maybe I had been.

“Oh shit, Mina,” Felix growled out, pulling my back to his chest and propping me upright.

Sonny fell out of my mouth but in two precise thrusts I felt Felix coming inside of me, emptying himself out while he held me up, a breast in each hand.

“Open your mouth, Romina,” Sonny instructed, pulling my jaw open with his thumb and his index finger, barely giving me enough time to register what needed to happen before his cum was filling my mouth in thick ropes. “Swallow,” he said.

He wiped the bottom of my lip and the smile painted itself over my face before I had a chance to register it.

“All mine now,” Corvin rumbled in my ear as he sat up himself, keeping his hands on my hips and bouncing me up and down on his thick shaft.

I moaned, grinding on him every time our skin connected.

“Still burning?” he whispered and I nodded. The winding inside me was building up again as Corvin hit that spot that nearly forced me to explode again without much work. “Don’t hold on to it, I need you to come again for me little lamb.” His words were the only motivator I needed, and soon I was giving in to the sweetest sin rippling through my body like shockwaves.

I tipped my head back, moaning louder with every punishing thrust. Corvin picked up the pace, and I held on to his biceps while I circled my hips to douse the fire still inside me. I dropped my head forward once again, noticing that Corvin was blinking rapidly.

“Come back to me,” I whispered but Felix heard.

“Pull her off of him.”

“Uh-uh,” I protested with a half moan.

Sonny wrapped his arm over my chest as if to try to rip me off him anyway but I dug into his arms with my nails instead and moaned a nearly animalistic sound, deep from within my chest. Corvin's eyes came back to me and a satisfactory smile grew on his face.

"You don't tell me no, Pet," Sonny said and my punishment was his already lubed cock pushing through my ass in one slow, torturous motion. His forearm pulled me by the throat so my back was pressed to his chest, and his fingers reached down, making circles on my clit as if he knew exactly what I wanted.

"Ah! Yes!" I cried out my orgasm thundering through me and spilling out of my legs and onto Corvin and the leather chaise.

"You keep pulling me out of it. You really were made for me." Corvin breathed out, his tempo slowing and with a final grunt he emptied himself deep inside me right on time with his best friend.

Sonny pulled out slowly, and Corvin lifted my chin with his finger to look up at him, I pressed my lips onto his. He pushed his way through slipping his tongue over mine and palming my breast in his hand, this time with a softness.

"Still burning?" he whispered as he pulled back, but this time it was nearly inaudible.

I nodded, a sly smirk fought to sneak its way out, but I bit my lip instead. He pulled me off of him and I groaned in disappointment, not able to hide how badly I needed one of them inside of me. I whined and mewed, aching to be touched when he got up from the leather chaise, leaving me confused.

"How are you not feeling it?" I asked them.

"Oh, we are. I've felt this way since the moment I first saw you." Felix said, not bothering to explain any further.

I heard that sinister chuckle behind me.

“You trust us, Pet?” I nodded and Sonny was behind me faster than I could comprehend, tying my hands together above my head.

I nodded my response knowing better but needing whatever punishment he’d dole out my way.

“Do you enjoy being a bad girl?” he asked me, his tone dripping in darkness.

“Yes,” I hissed, giving him the words he loved to hear.

His palm met my pussy with a sharp sting and I cried out from the unexpected burst of pleasure. I let my eyes wander around the room, Felix was gone now, and Corvin sat on the ground, his boxers on, leaning against a wooden beam. He put on a good show but even as quickly as he came out of that one, I knew it still took a toll on him.

His eyes burned straight through me, like he wasn’t going to miss whatever this was, even if all he could do to be a part of it was watch. Felix came into the room with a Cheshire grin spread over his face. His hand held the vibrating wand Sonny had used on me a few times in the past.

He clicked it on, it buzzed so loudly my eyes widened seeing the vibrations move through his hand. I bit my lip, groaning in anticipation and moving my hips frantically through the air.

“Settle down or I’ll tie your legs to your wrists.” Sonny threatened, pulling my legs apart and rubbing his fingers through the arousal still dripping out of me.

Probably some cum too.

I slowed my hip movements and finally Felix touched down with the wand on the inside of my thighs. It was enough to make me combust. But I knew where it was really headed and the anticipation was forcing me to drip

a river onto the chair. Once he finally made his way to my center I sobbed at the heat of the buzzing branding me from the inside out.

My climax burst out of me in stuttered waves, and with the first pull, Sonny took the opportunity to dive three fingers deep inside me again, rubbing along the walls and caressing that spot inside that drove me insane.

“When do you think she’ll have had enough?” Felix asked Sonny but his eyes stayed on me.

“Don’t stop until she’s done,” Sonny said and I bucked my hips into his hand.

“More,” I begged with a whimper. I felt so empty now, I didn’t know how I could live without two of them inside of me at all times.

“Don’t worry, you’ll feel normal soon once you’ve spent a bit more of this fire, Pet.” Sonny read my mind, but I groaned impatiently.

Felix turned up the wand and I screamed out as another climax took hold of me, nearly immobilizing me. I breathed heavy pants, my chest rising and falling while Felix kept my legs spread and Sonny shoved a fourth finger inside me. He raised an eyebrow, looking up at me in challenge to see if I would fight him on it this time.

I wouldn’t.

I knew now, the only true way to live was to experience every ounce of bliss Sonny Santorini could wring out of my body.

It didn’t matter if there was a Heaven or a Hell, because the greatest pleasure and the greatest pain was here on Earth, with them. The realization squeezed around my lungs like a handful of smoke trying to steal my breath.

This was the lesson.

A fifth finger entered me and as he slid his hand inside, every ounce of reservation that kept me from shrieking abandoned me. It was a banshee scream that surfaced from the depths of my soul. Sonny gave me a moment to adjust, and Felix removed the toy and replaced it with the flat of his tongue, making gentle circles around the hardened bead. I gasped at the contrast from the wand to his mouth, mewling and bucking my hips for more of anything I could get.

Sonny coated as much of his hand in my juices. He moved it back and forth, in and out so slowly I thought I was going to lose it. I looked down in marvel and he looked up at me in satisfaction.

“I told you I’d do it.” He thrusted in and out, his knuckles rubbing along my walls with the kind of veracity that made me think he enjoyed it just as much.

“Oh God! Yes!” I cried repeatedly, shaking my head back and forth unable to stop the liquid from spilling out of my legs again.

Sonny pulled out from me while Felix untied my wrists, tremors of pleasure still erupting through my body at just the touch of their skin on mine. My chest heaved up and down laboriously as I fought to catch my breath. Sonny brought his fingers to his mouth licking each one clean in a way that was so seductive I was clenching my thighs again just at the scene.

“I made a mess.”

“Mmm, if I die from drowning in your cum, then let it be known I died a happy man,” Sonny mused and I looked away to hide my embarrassment.

But he was there in a moment, pulling my chin into his hold and locking his lips around mine with a deep moan that came straight from his chest. “Still burning?” He checked, but this time I shook my head.

He smiled a genuine smile.

“Good, I was a little worried there we were going to have to fuck you to death.” He joked, but I scrunched my eyebrows together in the middle.

“Now what?”

“Now you belong to us, forever, and we belong to you. But you’ve always known that,” Sonny said and I nodded.

I could feel it inside me. The same feelings I’d always had for them, but there was no doubt in my heart anymore. I was theirs and they were mine. Sealed in blood, cum, and something like faith.

“Wait…Did you guys do this too?” I asked, realizing that if they’d done this before then it meant…

“What’s your question, little lamb?” Corvin smirked from the corner.

“Have you guys…Did you guys—”

Sonny cut me off before I could turn my thoughts into a question.

“I don’t know, what do you think?” His expression was serious again though I knew it was a farce.

“You’re not gonna tell me are you?” I crossed my arms over my chest.

“I think it’s better if we leave it up to your imagination.” Felix winked and pulled me up by the hands.

*OceanofPDF.com*

It had been two weeks since Arlan had died. Romina wandered the halls of this mansion like a ghost with unfinished business. Unsatisfied with life and sighing far too loudly for it to be ignored.

“What are you thinking about? The dream?” I caught her staring off again.

She did a lot of that these days. After she told us about all the parts of all the dreams she’d been having come to life, we decided to collect as many pieces as we could to sort out this puzzle.

“It’s not even a dream anymore. Just flashes in the dark. Now that everything else has happened, there’s just fragments left. I can’t piece it out. I can’t see how it’s supposed to end.” She looked up at me with concern through heavily black painted eyes. “It’s like watching a movie backwards, except the further you get from the end, you forget everything you’ve seen.”

“Maybe it doesn’t have to end now, maybe the end is when you’re with us, old and tired of our shit.”

“The dream always ends.”

“How do you think it should end?”

“There’s… a crucifix,” she said with some hesitation. “And Korina is there too.” She bit her lip.

“What?” Sonny said like he wasn’t fully caught up.

“She named the snake Korina.” Corvin filled him in.

“That’s…” He scratched his head. “That’s fine. I guess.” He knew he didn’t have a leg to stand on.

Almost twenty years and that snake was nothing but menacing to the three of us, now all of a sudden it was a pet. Coiled around her arm at all hours of the day, siphoning her body heat. I wanted that to be me wrapped around her instead.

*Was I jealous of a snake?*

We really needed to find out if we could get the venom out of that thing, but she didn’t let anyone aside Romina within ten feet of her.

“We’re not gonna be finding any crosses around here, little lamb. Your grandfather had no love for God.” I told her.

“It’s the cathedral. The guy, the one that I—”

“*I* killed him, Pet.” Sonny interrupted her. “And my only regret is not having done it sooner, the first time he put his hands on you.” He seemed genuinely angry with himself about it and knowing Sonny that one would leave a permanent on him.

“He said to me, before Sonny killed him, ‘Frollo said you’d give yourself easily’ I think… maybe Frollo sent him there.” She looked down like she didn’t want to believe it, but she’d been through his gauntlet enough times to know better.

“I wouldn’t put it past Frollo to have sent that freak up to the chapel to get rid of you,” Corvin said angrily.

“I have to kill him,” she said and I blinked back my shock that such dark words were capable of coming out of her mouth.

She wasn’t the girl we found anymore. She was the woman she chose to become.

“Why?” Sonny questioned her. “What do you think killing him is going to give you?”

He knew a little something about that.

“It’s not about what it’ll give me, it’s about what it’ll give others who won’t be ruined by his influence, before he has the chance to corrupt someone to become the next him,” she said angrily.

She wasn’t wrong.

“Okay. But we do it right.” Sonny nodded and walked away, satisfied with her answer.

We spent the next weeks preparing, getting all of our ducks in a row with our alibis and enrolling in Oxford now that we were free to access most of our fortunes. Sonny and Romina would get married in a courthouse as soon as we made it to the UK for the sake of not allowing the money to be stolen by the church.

It’s not like it would really matter, Romina refused to keep everything. She planned on giving more than half of Arlan’s money to charities around

the world. Though no amount of money could fix our country's problem, and she was finally seeing that for herself, she still wanted to try.

She cried helplessly when she realized she couldn't just throw money at religion to make it disappear. We helped her find the best organizations to send money to and requested they provided her with updates. Even with more than half of her inheritance gone, she was still a multi-billionaire. It didn't sit well with her, but we decided to show her that she could be impactful, make a change where it mattered.

She was sending her friend to Oxford, too. Got her a little apartment and paid for her tuition and everything else she could ever want. We warned Reesa ahead of time to get off school grounds before everything went to shit. She was waiting for us upstate at some motorcycle club compound so we could all travel together overseas.

There were no complaints from us on that front, she was going to be committing a lot of felonies when she lied to the authorities for us to cover our tracks. As much of a pain in the ass as Reesa was, she was loyal, and she was a decent friend. We owed her more than what she was being given.

We'd pay her back in full someday.

"You know the plan," I reminded her in the car, squeezing her thigh in my hand.

"You'll make sure the cathedral is empty?" she asked with a nervous exhale.

"Yes. I promise."

*OceanofPDF.com*

It wasn’t hard to find him. It was twelve and he was putting his books together on top of the podium, waiting for the pews to fill up with students. It looked like he was happily teaching all his classes again now that the boys and I had been gone from campus for a few weeks. As if nothing had ever happened.

Light poured through the stained glass windows, the colorful shine reflecting off the golden crucifix. It was the clearest damned sign I’d gotten so far. Goosebumps pebbled down my neck, letting me know I was on the right path.

This was the moment.

The students wouldn’t be coming, and the boys were evacuating the building of all the nuns and priests.

“Father,” I said from my seat on the empty pew, leaning back and crossing my legs.

“You’re alive,” he said with outrage and shock.

“Did you think your little errand boy killed me?” I said almost with a laugh.

“I didn’t know what to think after you all disappeared. What are you doing back here? Did those heathens tire of your whorish cunt?” I winced at his words, getting up from my seat and walking towards him.

Even though I had built a wall of ice around my heart, preparing myself for this moment, he knew how to crush his way through it with ease.

“I’m leaving. I might buy all your pretty little churches and set them on fire before I do though,” I threatened dryly.

He flared his nostrils at me, meeting me halfway as he lifted his hand up like he was going to strike. That’s when Sonny came from behind and wrapped the rope around his left wrist and Corvin followed suit with the right. They spread his arms into a T and he lost his footing, falling to the ground on his back. He yelled, tugging at the restraints but they just pulled him along, dragging him across the aisle past the pews while Frollo screamed pitiful curses.

“End this nonsense now you heathens! AGNES! SOPHIA!” His voice boomed through the chambers of the cathedral.

Sonny’s dark chuckle came in low at first but eventually turned into an unhinged sort of laughter, pulling another rope around the archbishops neck and dragging him upwards onto the altar.

“It’s funny that you think we’re the ones in charge here. No one’s coming for you old man.” Sonny’s eyes met mine once he spoke the words into the headmaster’s ear.

I could see the rage building in his expression as he fought against the boys’ hold on him. Sonny climbed up on the altar and began to kick at the

life-sized cross that hung above it, each kick shaking it loose, closer to falling off the wall.

“What has that witch done to convince you to do her bidding?” he spat out and I stepped closer. “You whore yourself out to them? Just like your mother, a nothing whore.”

I winced at his words again, reaching into my holster and feeling the smooth stone surface of my knife. Maybe it was the gemstone’s soothing properties calming me down, or maybe it was the thought of sinking the blade into the man I’d once hoped would let me call him dad.

Maybe it was both.

“She does have a magical cunt,” Felix said and Corvin laughed along.

I stood inches from his face while he continued to thrash and seethe. Sonny’s efforts weren’t in vain and the cross came crashing down to the ground.

“I bet you sleep with all three of them, don’t you? Filthy fucking whore.” For some reason the insult didn’t dig so deep with my guys standing there, helping me through this.

“Sometimes all at once,” I said, narrowing my eyes at him with a smile on my face.

Sonny swiped his feet under the headmaster’s, forcing him down on his back once again. His head hit the floorboards with a hard thud, and he cried out in pain. Sonny and Corvin took the opportunity to tie each side of the rope to the cross. His arms stretched out to a T and he yelled obscenities, calling me a cunt all while begging me to let him go.

“You sure it’s clear?” Sonny asked Felix.

“Everyone’s out.”

“Lift him up,” I told them.

They picked the heavy cross up together and rested it against the wall. I pulled the knife out of its holster, thumbing the shiny opal before revealing it completely.

“Romina. Wait Romina.” He began to barter. “I’m your family. Families fight.”

“We weren’t family. Family takes care of each other, they look out for each other, they’d do anything for each other.” I looked over to my guys, each of them so broken and so perfect in their own way.

Just like me.

“You hid me away, you took everything from me. *Why?*” I begged, pressing the tip of the knife to his chest and cutting through his priestly robe.

I flattened the palm of my hand to his chest and Korina slithered out from the inside of my sleeve. Her tongue flickered against his skin before she muscled her way up his shoulders, coiling her tail around his neck.

“Romina! Stop this! Untie me, we can talk about this.” He was panicking, frozen with fear and dripping in sweat.

“ANSWER ME!” I screamed with rage, and she hissed at him before sinking her fangs into his shoulder.

He screamed in agony.

“Don’t let her do this, she’s insane. She hasn’t been properly exposed to people; she doesn’t understand the consequences of her actions,” he shouted, thrashing in place against the cross.

“Oh, she knows the consequences.” Felix smirked, crossing his legs and leaning against a pew as he made himself more comfortable. “You showed her when you sent your boy into our home to drown her.”

“Why?” I screamed again in his face, this time pressing the tip of the knife to his bare sternum.

He yelled out in pain as I punctured the skin slowly, not pushing the knife in enough to stab but just enough for drops of blood to bead around the tip of the blade.

Such a calming shade of red.

Korina bit down once again.

“What else was I supposed to do with you?” He sobbed and I started to push the knife in.

“What the fuck does that mean?” Sonny stood.

“Her mother was a temptress, just like her.” He seethed and panted with every word. “I broke my vows for her.”

“Korina.” I said my mother’s name and his eyes widened.

“Then you know who you are.” The color drained from his face.

“What do you mean you broke your vows for her? What did she come to you for?” I asked, unsure if I’d even believe him.

“She needed someone she could trust.” He shook his head practically laughing at the memory, so I pushed the knife in, sinking it an inch deeper.

He coughed and blood spewed out of his mouth with his screams.

“Why would Korina Black trust you?” Sonny asked.

“Why would she not trust her priest?” He extended his neck away from the cross, practically spitting the words at me.

“What? Korina Black didn’t need a priest,” Felix gritted out.

“She was in my confessional every Sunday, praying for her father’s sins. She was possessed with demons, just like this vile girl. Only Korina wasn’t blind to it.” He sneered something villainous.

“Liar.” Felix yanked on the rope, stretching his arms too far.

“You want us to believe that Korina Black was praying for salvation in your house?” Corvin asked, putting a blade to the archbishop’s throat.

“The truth belongs to God,” he said slowly before resting his head against the crucifix once more.

“You said she needed someone she could trust. What did she need you for?” I asked.

He hesitated answering, so Corvin slashed carelessly down his shoulder, the blood poured out heavily.

“To give her a child untainted with sin. She was a heathen whore. Said she had a dream her kid would be the end of her father’s legacy. That she couldn’t let her father have the girl to corrupt, that she would be the weapon that brought down the Satanic Shrine. Once she died I realized it was all just feverish hallucinations from the virus and I was stuck with the child.” His face turned to the side and I froze.

The need to escape the moment was overwhelming.

But the only way out was forward.

“You’re lying. He’s lying to you Romina. You’re not her real father.” Corvin shouted like he was angry on my behalf.

“You brainwashed Korina Black!” Sonny took his gun out and shot a bullet into the archbishop’s leg. He howled a banshee-like scream. “Why is she dead?” Sonny asked, nudging Frollo’s chin with his gun, trying to get as many answers as he could, observing my shock and realizing I was spiraling in my own mind.

I pulled the knife out and he groaned, blood spilled out slowly from the small hole. He shook from pain and Korina coiled down his arm, plunging her fangs into his wrist.

“I didn’t brainwash her, she came to my door willingly. Korina was a light in the dark. She was pure. She was good. She didn’t belong to Arlan, she belonged to me. As do you, Romina. My child. My daughter.” It almost sounded like a curse coming from his lips.

Corvin pulled a knife from his own holster and without warning he severed Frollo’s ring finger off. Blood splattered everywhere and the archbishop flailed wildly with every pained sob he drew.

“You kept Romina up in that tower so that you could fill her mind with your sick little words and your depraved beliefs. So that you could turn her into what you thought was your own version of Korina,” Felix said angrily.

“Why is she dead?” I asked with a calm voice.

“The virus. She fell sick during pregnancy… or maybe it was when you were a few months old, I can’t recall. She was sick a long time, longer than most. She died in that bell tower you know? The cathedral hadn’t been built yet, it was where she hid away from her father.” He almost looked sad, like maybe he did care about her.

The thought of either of them left a bitter taste on my tongue.

Between the two of them they’d caused me nothing but pain and suffering. Korina’s dreams had been wrong, they had to have been. Otherwise why would mine have led me right back to my destiny?

I was meant to be here, with my men at my side like a shield.

“She was wrong,” I told him, squaring my shoulders and lifting my chin up to look at him.

He was drooling, blood pooled at multiple bite marks and the skin around them was swelled and purpled. I extended a hand and Korina slithered back onto my palm, coiling her body around my arm like a tight embrace.

“Wha-?” He moaned, becoming less and less lucid with drool slipping from his mouth as the venom made its way through his veins.

He was running out of time; I wasn’t going to get to draw it out like I thought I would.

“She was wrong,” I repeated. “Her dreams. I’m not going to bring down the Shrine, I’m going to help it grow. I’m going to destroy everything you’ve built. I’m going to send your God directly to hell,” I whispered into his ear before stepping back.

“Heathen…whore,” He mumbled.

Felix rolled his eyes and extended a hand to his brother, who placed a knife in his hand without question. He walked around the crucifix until he stood in front of Frollo, and in two quick moves he reached into his mouth and sliced the blade over his tongue. It fell to the ground with a wet sound and Frollo’s eyes rolled to the back of his head while his mouth filled with blood.

“Sorry pretty girl, I couldn’t let him keep calling you that. If you need the glory of this kill, I’d go ahead and finish him off before he chokes on his blood.” He pressed his lips to my cheek and slapped the archbishop until he regained consciousness again.

His cries flooded the Cathedral ceilings and I thumbed the black opal handle. I looked between all three men I loved so much and without hesitation I plunged the knife below his sternum again, this time shoving it all the way through. I drug the knife down, slicing past his belly button and cutting through his flesh until his guts came pouring out of his stomach. He shook violently, loud unintelligible wails came from his mouth but they ended just as quickly with his last breath.

I wiped the blood off the steel of my blade on his holy garbs before sheathing my knife. Felix's arm was there, crushing me into his side while Corvin's lips pressed to my forehead. Sonny walked in front of us, pulling his phone out and dialing while we walked out of the gaudy golden monstrosity.

"I'd like to call in a bomb threat," Sonny said. "NotreDame PC," he said after a few seconds. "How do I know?" he asked with a laugh. "Because I put it there." He put his phone back in his pocket before turning around, closing his lips to mine, his hand cradling my cheek softly.

He opened the door to the car, and I slipped inside the back. Felix sat in the front and Sonny took the driver's side. Corvin nudged my rib and pressed his index finger to his lips like he had a secret for me. Sonny started the car, and the Grand Cathedral slowly became smaller and smaller as we drove further away. By the time we reached the Chapel it was barely a small golden figurine far out in the horizon.

Students and faculty were gathered at the lake, confusion written onto their faces about the bomb threat they'd been warned about. Corvin pulled out a small box with a single button on it and raised his eyebrows up at me, nothing but mischief painting his expression.

"Wanna do the honors?"

"What?" I asked and he raised his eyebrows again, like a challenge.

I pressed the button just as we drove through the open gates of the campus. The ground below us shook violently and students screamed in the distance. The flames were unmistakable, and my eyes widened with joy at the sight of Frollo's holy building burning from the inside out.

Felix cackled, slapping his leg and putting his feet up on the dashboard. Sonny's face betrayed him, and his expression softened as well, another

smile breaking out but this one coated with malicious intent.

“Hey, so what is this thing? It’s been down here a while.” I asked, kicking the giant metal box on the floorboard.

“It’s the safe, from your mother’s club. Arlan asked me to retrieve it but he never said what for.” He fished inside the middle console before tossing me a single silver key. “That should open it.”

I looked to Corvin who picked up the steel box, it was heavier than it looked though it wasn’t large. The key slid inside the lock with ease and a loud click sounded out in the car before the door sprung open.

“What’s inside?” Felix asked from the front.

“Some money.” I shuffled through the contents. “And a letter, I think.” I pulled out the wrinkled piece of paper and read it.

*Romina,*

*I’m writing this letter at the beginning of my journey, hoping it will find you at the end of yours. I’ve dreamt my life and I’ve dreamt yours. In every dream my life comes to an end at the same place, in that belltower, where you are born. I’ll have told a million lies by the time I achieve what I must do, to guarantee your safety.*

*You are one of four pieces of a puzzle that must come together to keep the Satanic Shrine alive, because only the four of you can tear down the Church’s hold on this country.*

*Fate is inevitable, the die has been cast, and we must all play our part. I regret nothing, and I hope your revenge was everything I dreamt it to be.*

*Love, even in death,*

*Korina*

“What does it say?” Felix asked.

“That’s for her to know, not us.” Sonny chastised him as if he could sense the contents of the letter from where he sat.

“It says…that we’re on the right path,” I told them with a smile, folding the letter and putting it in my pocket.

“Now what, Pet? What does happily ever after look like for you?” Sonny looked back at me from the rearview mirror.

“It’s…this—Driving into the sunset with the three of you. It’s all I could ever ask for. It’s all I need.” I took a deep breath, laying back onto Corvin’s chest and melting into his arms.

The sun was a dark orange filled with crimson rays peeking out of the distance. Pink clouds moved with the breeze over the imagery like a painted canvas. I’d seen many sunsets from that tower. This one was the most beautiful. Maybe because I was finally free.

The End

*OceanofPDF.com*

## One year later

"How many times are you gonna rewatch this scene?" I asked Sonny with a giggle.

He had the most peaceful look on his face, but this was the sixth time he'd rewound *The Fellowship of the Rings* to watch Frodo get stabbed by the Witch-king. As much as I enjoyed his O-face, it was better during sex.

"One year he tried to make us watch all three movies in one day. That's when we made the rule that we had to spread them all out over the week before the New Years. So now he makes us watch all six instead." Felix laughed, bringing the bowl of popcorn from the kitchen into the living room and sitting next to me on the couch.

Sonny scooped me onto his lap and took a deep inhale of my hair before wrapping his arms tightly around my waist.

“They’re just unorganized and lack discipline. There *are* enough hours in the day to watch the first trilogy in one go, if you do it right. I’ve done the math,” he said, clearing his throat at the end.

“EXCUSE ME?” Corvin asked with dramatic astonishment, plopping himself on Sonny’s other side. “You’re the one who has to watch all the fucked-up parts sixteen times and drag a three hour movie out to four. There’s no discipline that can give me back all the time I’ve wasted there Sonny-boy.” Corvin laughed, reaching for a handful of popcorn and purposefully dropping some on top of Sonny before getting it in his mouth.

“Shouldn’t we have watched the Hobbit first?” I asked and they all shouted ‘No’ in sync so loudly I had to shield my ears. “Okay! Okay!” I raised my hands defensively. “Maybe you shouldn’t have had me read it first then, that’s very disorienting.”

Sonny toyed with the band around my finger and I smiled at the gold gleaming in the light. It actually said *One ring to rule them all* but the ‘all’ was in reference to my men. Sonny and I got married in the summertime in a courthouse with Felix and Corvin as our witnesses. And then, we got on a plane and went to a country that let me marry the twins as well.

We claimed what was ours and Sonny took his place as the leader of the Satanic Shrine as he’d been mentored to. I was working on a nonprofit management major here at Oxford and once I graduated I’d funnel most of Arlan’s money into as many different channels as I could.

I wanted to help everyone who’d been affected by the Church’s hold in the United States. I knew it wasn’t my job to fix the mess that it had become, but I still wanted to try. With Frollo out of the way, many of the parochial schools began to close down because of lack of leadership. Soon we’d be able to fund atheistic schools to reopen in the west and once

college opportunities would be open to those of all class levels the cycle of poverty and capitalism would finally end.

Sonny was majoring in finance, making sure that everything we did came back to us tenfold and that no matter how much of Arlan's money I gave away it returned to us. He said it was simple economics, but I swore it was magic. Prosperity bloomed abundance.

Despite him saying he was losing interest, he ended up being too good to quit. Felix was actually still playing soccer, and was looking to drop out of school once he decided on the contract he would take for whichever league he'd play for. There were a few professional teams interested in him and it really just depended on which European country we wanted to live in for the next few years.

School wasn't for Corvin. He was happy enough with everything he had and claimed you didn't need a degree to throw knives and ride motorcycles. I had no complaints, he was happier and healthier now than I'd ever seen him before. My guys were all perfect exactly as they were.

Once The Fellowship somehow turned into the Two Towers with nothing but a half attempt at a bathroom break, I shifted uncomfortably on Sonny's lap while Gollum led them to the gates of Mordor.

"Are you trying to start something, Pet? Cuz I'll finish it." Sonny hummed in my ear, pulling my hip with a firm grip of his hands to grind me against his already impossibly hard erection.

I gasped but before I could answer, both Felix and Corvin dropped a hand to each thigh and pulled me apart. I tried to clamp my knees shut but they overpowered me far too easily.

"But, Sam and Frodo." I faked a breathy protest and Corvin rumbled a chuckle in my ear.

“Sam’s been carrying Frodo’s weight for nearly a century, little lamb. He can do it again without us watching.” His hand slid upwards, and I instinctively arched my back, grinding harder onto Sonny and forcing a groan from deep down in his chest.

“And I’ve been wanting to sink my cock inside of you since you pranced out here in that dress.” Sonny entwined his legs inside of mine and used them to spread my knees open.

Already too used to this, I dropped my head back, resting it on his shoulder until I felt the cold touch of his hands moving down to my center. Felix’s hand tightened on my thigh and inched its way up as well until I felt all three of their hands individually rubbing my most sensitive area. I gasped at the feeling of fingers entering me while another set rubbed my clit up and down.

Sonny chuckled in my ear, using his fingers to pull my head forward before he gripped my jaw and turned my head down.

“Look at what they’re doing to you.” His voice was laced with seduction, and I turned my gaze south to see both brothers’ fingers doing unspeakable things to me.

Multiple digits belonging to an array of hands entered me with no regard for rhythm or tempo and I raised my hips up to deepen the sensation but Sonny tightened his free hand around my hip, clamping me back down over his erection.

“Oh shit,” I swore, earning another chuckle from Corvin.

“I wanna feel your pussy soaking through my pants before I fill it up.” Sonny’s filthy words sent a flush throughout my entire body.

I didn’t have time to react. Suddenly he was lifting me up and Corvin’s mouth was latched on to my dripping center, his brother’s fingers still

thrusting deep inside of me while he obscenely lapped me down with his tongue. Sonny's hands held my thighs up and kept them spread over his lap and I writhed and moaned at how they could tear me apart so savagely when they worked together.

"You're not playing fair." I squeezed Sonny's arms as the first climax took me by surprise.

"I have never promised to play fair with you, Romina." Sonny said into my ear.

I felt his fingers stroking my clit, tangling with Felix's as they stretched me wider like it was a personal challenge to them.

"Sonny," I gasped, "more!" He pulled his fingers out and slowly pushed them into my puckered hole.

First one, then a second, using my arousal still coating his fingers to enter me.

"What do you want, pretty girl?" Felix asked, a fox-like grin stamped over his face like he loved watching me unravel for him, for them.

"I want you. All of you. Now please. To hell with Frodo." I shook my head side to side as I felt myself building up again, that coil winding tighter inside of me as Felix and Sonny worked to build me into a Frenzy.

Then Corvin was there, lifting me up and holding me by the cheeks as he lowered me down to impale me on his obnoxiously thick length while he came to a stand.

"Oh, hell," I cursed again, never seeming to accustom myself to just how good any of them felt once they were inside of me.

"I'm gonna stuff you up so good." He hummed in my ear and I choked out a laugh but the minute I opened my mouth Felix's hard chest was pressed to my back.

“Say the words, Mina. Tell me how bad you want our cocks.” I reached back, curling my arm around his neck to pull him in.

“Please, please, please,” I begged. “Fill me up. I need you,” I whimpered, feeling Felix shift behind me like he was pulling himself out of his pants.

“Where do you want me?’ he whispered but I didn’t answer.

Instead, I felt him toying at the same entrance where Corvin currently filled and I shook my head.

“No, no, it’s too much. You’re both too big.” Corvin pulled halfway out to allow his brother the room he needed to enter too.

“You can handle it, little lamb. Take both of us in that pretty little cunt of yours.” He whispered the encouragement in my ears and I gazed up at him, desire and lust dripping from every pore of his body.

Felix pushed inside me slowly, the burning sting of the two of them stretching me far wider than I could ever imagine making my head spin.

“You’re too big,” I cried and Corvin gripped my face to turn me to face Sonny.

“Open your eyes, look at what you do to him.” I fluttered my eyelids open to see Sonny sitting on the couch, legs spread and his erection firmly in his hand as he slowly stroked up and down, his eyes glued to where Felix and Corvin both attempted to fill me.

I braced myself on his forearm and once Felix had pushed the crown of his length inside of me, both of them didn’t wait before thrusting up.

“Oh God!” I choked out as they slammed inside of me.

They didn’t slow down, pounding into me at different speeds, filling me up to the brim. I felt like I would split in half from their vicious torment at any second. I could feel both of them individually moving against each

other, a fullness I'd never experienced before. A fullness I couldn't explain or describe.

My head was spinning, and my body climbed that ladder of pleasure not knowing when or where to jump. I couldn't discern where my climax started or ended as they continued to thrust inside of me together, one orgasm cascading into another as my eyes rolled to the back of my head in a display that must have been truly unholy.

"You're not done yet, it's not even midnight." Sonny pulled me off of both men.

"And we haven't properly celebrated you passing your finals." Corvin bit his lip, stroking himself while Sonny adjusted himself underneath me on the couch. I straddled myself over his lap, squeezing my left leg between him and the back of the couch before sitting on top of his erection.

"I'm pretty sure we have." I laughed, lowering down to kiss him.

Our tongues met with passion, his hands rubbing up and down my body with an urgent need. Corvin unzipped my dress, helping me out of it without keeping me from Sonny. Then I felt the thick head of his length pressing up against my core.

"Sonny," I whimpered.

"Say, 'Pretty please, put your giant cock inside me, *Sir.*'" His hand wrapped around my throat softly and my skin pebbled from his words.

"Pretty please." I breathed out, his fingers slipping through my folds and sparking pleasure through my whole body. "Put your giant cock inside me." I moaned while he teased at the entrance, his fingers gripping around my hips with a bruising pressure, not letting me claim what I needed for myself. "*Sir.*"

He impaled me with no mercy. I gripped his shoulders for leverage, throwing my head back with each upward slam of his hips. His hand squeezed around my throat, cutting my oxygen off just enough to send my arousal sliding down my legs.

I felt the lube dripping down the crack of my butt and with little to no warning Corvin's fingers had found their way inside me. First one, then two, but they quickly turned into three. In and out, in sync with Sonny's thrusts.

"Oh God!" I cried, another orgasm taking over my body, my cum dripping down my thighs and onto Sonny's legs while I shook with pleasure.

"Shut your mouth or I'll shut it for you, Pet," he threatened and I smirked.

"Shit." Felix laughed. "You created a monster." He slipped his pants off fully and stood at the edge of the couch, positioned so that he would be directly in front of my face.

He grabbed the back of my head and urged me towards him. His grip tightened on my jaw with his thumb and index finger and I opened my mouth for him, swirling my tongue around his length as he sent it deep into the back of my throat. I moaned, hollowing my cheeks and savoring him in my mouth.

Then Corvin's finger's were gone and the bottle of lube made that obnoxious but recognizable sound that sent a chill of anticipation up my spine.

"Breathe," he warned me and Sonny's fingers found my clit, distracting me while he stayed beneath me unmoving.

Corvin pushed his way around the tight band of my puckered hole slowly until he bottomed out completely. Felix's grip on my scalp tightened and he demanded my attention back.

"Give me that mouth, pretty girl." He controlled each stroke, filling my mouth while Corvin and Sonny split me in half.

I came with a muffled scream but it was barely acknowledged, each man continuing their pursuit to turn me into a pile of cummed out jello. Felix gagged me with every thrust sending tears down my face and covering Sonny in the aftermath of my arousal. Corvin slammed his hips from behind in sync with Sonny, the two of them filling me up and ripping apart the fabric of space and time with nothing but pleasure.

"Yes!" I screamed.

I came for what felt like an eternity, eventually taking the three of them with me as they spilled their releases into my mouth and my guts. We collapsed into a sweaty breathless pile on top of Sonny but after a few minutes it was Felix who appeared with a warm wet towel to clean me up.

"Let's get you to bed, beautiful," Corvin whispered in my ears before swooping me up into his arms and carrying me to my room.

"Wait. Sleep with me?" I asked and the three of them looked between each other as if I'd only asked the question to one of them.

"Who?" Sonny asked and I rolled my eyes.

"If I have to answer that question then I'm sleeping alone." I turned over to my stomach but before I could even turn my cheek to the pillow I felt the bed sinking with the weight of the three of them.

"Happy Saturnalia love, I hope it was a good one." Felix placed a kiss onto my temple.

They surrounded me with their heat. I dropped my head on a muscular chest, not bothering to open my eyes to see who it belonged to before using it as a pillow. A hand clasped its fingers through mine just as a set of legs entwined their way between my own. I let out an exhale and drifted off to sleep.

All of my dreams had come true.

**Thank you so much for reading Heartless Heathens – If you enjoyed the book please take a moment to leave a review by clicking - here -** Your review helps my book get into more hands, and as an indie author it is so appreciated!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Amy -** Companheira, amiga, sister. You watched me bleed these words from my filthy mind onto paper. Without a doubt, this book would not have happened without you. My love for you is eternal.

**Alex, Byron, Imani** – I couldn’t have written this story without you, thank you for listening to my frustrations and helping me gather my thoughts when I didn't think there was a way out of that Godforsaken school.

**Jessie, Jen, Louise, Kendall, Ruthie, Jessie, Christian, Christina, Meghan, Erinne, Addy, Wanika, Mildren, Steph, Mila** – I wanna cry when I think about you all because I never imagined I would have people so excited to read my words, I’m forever grateful to you for your support and love and encouragement.

**Brianna -** My favorite part about this project was the friendships that came along the way. Thank you for creating the beautiful art inside of this

book and bringing my characters to life. I'm forever bound to you my friend, you are my sister for life.

**Leah -** Tolerating my madness is a skill that deserves recognition. I came to you with nothing but a vibe for this cover and you created a kind of magic that doesn't exist. You are an absolute gem of a person and I will never let you go.

**Karen** – My editor, thank you so much for believing in me, and for your guidance, and for going along with my insanity.

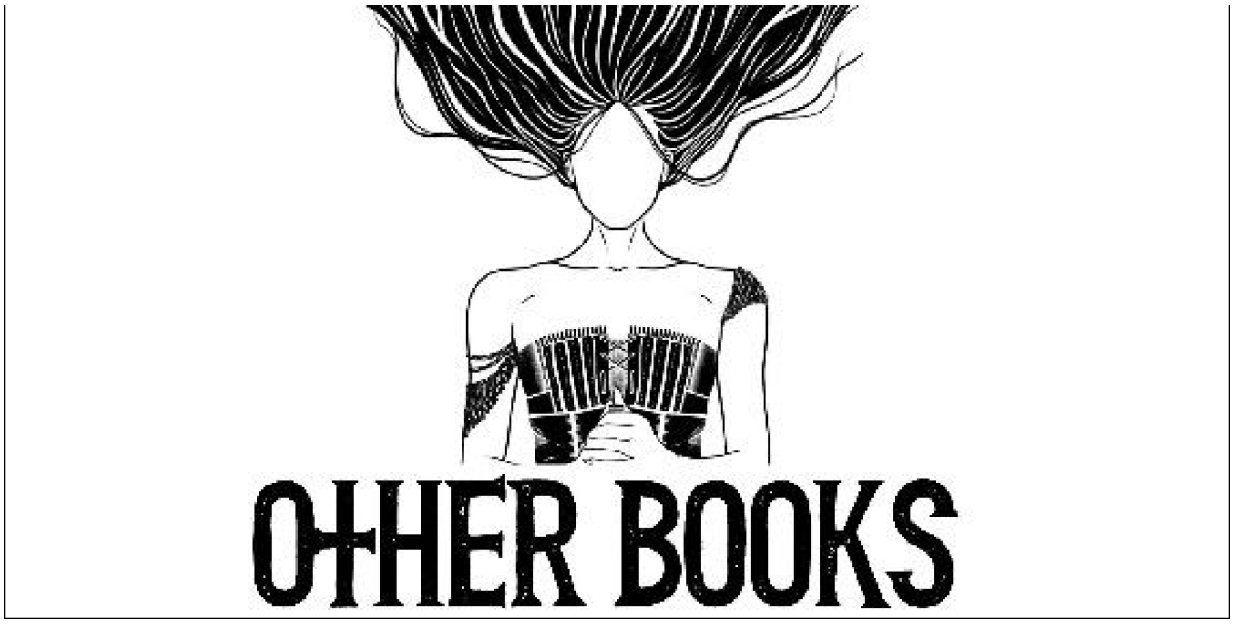
**Shoshana -** Thank you for your knowledge and counseling on how to navigate a story rooted in Christianity without antisemitism, I hope I was able to do this here.

**To my husband, my family, my friends -** Thank you all for supporting me through my dream. You should not have made it this far in the book. Let's never talk about this again, just like Romina's bucket.

**To my ARC team -** I am so thankful for you!

**To all my readers** – You all make this possible, I'm forever indebted to you.

*OceanofPDF.com*




**Reina del Cártel Series:**

Queen of Nothing (Book 1) – Read Now

Reign of Ruin (Book 2) - Read Now

Empire of Carnage (Book 3) 2/14/23- Pre-order Now

**Coming Soon:**

Forbidden Fables – A fairytale Fusion Anthology 2/14/23 Pre-order Now

*OceanofPDF.com*

Santana Knox is the pen name of a South American author. An immigrant who was born in Brazil and fell in love with the English language, she is a neuro-divergent creative, a mother, a Witch, a devotee of Santa Muerte and an absolute heathen at a heart. She is no longer interested in traditional love stories, but of the villain's journey and everything that happens in between.

To enter her cult, join her facebook reading group: Santana's Psychos, like her on facebook, or follow her on social media. (@Santana.knox)

*OceanofPDF.com*